

THE  
BRITISH FREEHOLDER,  
A  
TRAGEDY.

AS PERFORMED

BY HIS MAJESTY'S SERVANTS IN LONDON,  
EDINBURGH, AND DUBLIN.

(from) Aut  
By J. JACKSON. Aston

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PERSUADES HOC TIBI VERE,  
MULTOS SEPTE VERUS NULLIS MAJORIBUS ORTOS,  
ET VIXISSE PROHOS, AMPLIS ET HONORIBUS AUCTOS.  
HOR. Sat. vi. lib. 1.

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1796.



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T O

SIR WATKIN WILLIAMS WYNN,  
OF WYNNSTAY, BARONET;

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DENBIGHSHIRE,  
AND LORD LIEUTENANT AND CUSTOS ROTULORUM  
OF THE COUNTY OF MERIONETH.

S I R,

IN seeking for a Patron to the BRITISH FREEHOLDER, I cannot entertain one moment's doubt. Every circumstance announces the name of SIR WATKIN WILLIAMS WYNN.

As lord of that romantic region where the scenes are laid, and as a patriotic assertor of the properties of your countrymen, old ELDRED claims, as it were, an hereditary right to your protection. As a friend to the Drama, you are entitled to every mark of respect from the servants of the Public in the Theatrical Department. And for that condescension with which you kindly undertook the protection of the HISTORY OF WALES, a work which my present avocation has for a short time suspended, I owe you, on every occasion, my most grateful acknowledgments; and for ever remain,

S I R,

Your most devoted,  
most obedient,  
and obliged,  
humble Servant,  
J. JACKSON.

## P R E F A C E.

ON publishing a play which has been so long written, and so frequently performed, it may be thought necessary to assign the cause of its being so many years withheld from the public inspection, and my inducement for presenting it to the world at this particular juncture.

It is needless to mention, that before I had a theatre of my own, I engaged Mrs. Jackson, myself, or both, occasionally, at Edinburgh, Dublin, or London. At each of those places, the *FREEHOLDER* was performed from the manuscript; which, being my private property, could not be acted but for my emolument. The moment I became possessed of the Edinburgh Theatre, this motive ceased to operate.

Settled as I now am in Scotland, it is immaterial to me, when or where the play is performed; and at the request of some particular friends it is now made public.

Among the many audiences before which it has appeared, a variety of criticisms most unavoidably have been made. The most material objection to the plot is, That for a chief, possessed of so extensive a tract as Loeline is supposed to have enjoyed, to pursue a poor old cottager, even to death, for the sake of his little property, is not only improbable, but out of nature.

To this I must reply, that the anecdote on which the plot is grounded differs very immaterially from the circumstances of the play, and that

that part of it respecting the farm of Eldred has the strongest stamp of traditional credit.

Setting the question of this fact aside, an instance in the Sacred Scripture, which few critics will dare to disbelieve, puts the possibility of its being in nature beyond a doubt. It is almost needless to mention that the vineyard of Noboth \* is here alluded to. But even the Holy Text, and all traditional vouchers, set apart, we daily see premeditated murders committed for much less inducements.

The dispositions and passions of men are various, and consequently occasion a multiplicity of pursuits, praise-worthy or culpable as the objects are laudable or criminal. The supposition, therefore, of a man in power contriving the destruction of an innocent old farmer through a motive of envy, is not a more unnatural conclusion, than that a daughter should poison her father in order to come more early at his fortune, or that a highwayman should take away the life of a traveller for the lucre perhaps of a few shillings.

The humble station of the principal character was another objection to this play. I must confess I have often lamented, that Tragedies in general are in too exalted a state. To feel for the situation of their heroes, we should all be kings or queens. Nothing touches the passions so strongly as a possibility of our being liable to the same distress. For this reason I chose the story of Eldred, as coming nearer the situation of the multitude, and consequently more interesting to the generality of mankind. If the more exalted beholders cannot feel thro' the motives of sympathy, they perhaps may be melted by the sensations of pity.

Some nice critics say, that Tragedy should not end happily, consequently my catastrophe is culpable. That, I take for granted, is an undecided point. For my own part, I confess I am more pleased with the happy turn in CYMBELINE, than I am with many of the horrid conclusions of plays too numerous and too well known to mention. The reception of the last scene of ELDRED confirmed me in my opinion of the propriety of my choice; and I am convinced, that great part of the success of the play was owing to the wished for, though unexpected, mode of Eldred's deliverance.

Perhaps the reason why so many tragedies are concluded unhappily, is the difficulty of saving the principal character with propriety. The bowl and dagger, as Dryden observes, are always ready to relieve an author when he is at a loss to complete his catastrophe.

Many subjects, historic facts especially, will not admit of a fortunate conclusion. But I still contend, that where a writer has it in his power, and can bring it about with propriety, it must give a greater degree of satisfaction, to see an oppressed or distressed hero rewarded for his virtues, than to behold innocent fall a victim to the machinations of villainy.

### PROLOGUE.

Amelia D.

C. A.

xx. quare. quare. xx.

# PROLOGUE.

*Spoken by Mr. JACKSON.*

THE feather'd eaglet flutt'ring on its nest,  
Throbbing with terrors and with doubts oppress,  
To the first bough his new-fledg'd pinion tries,  
Ere he commits him to the vaulted skies,  
Then through the wide expanse he wings his  
flight,  
Cleaves the blue ether, and attempts the height.

Thus I, to prove the temper of my quill,  
In petit Prologues first essay'd my skill,  
The public breath produc'd the latent vein,  
And approbation cheer'd the infant-strain ;  
Till, bolder grown by the inspiring gale,  
My bark, now larger, spreads a wider sail,  
With sides more pond'rous presumes to brave  
The force of Criticism's bursting wave.

But, metaphor apart :—Behold before ye,  
The vent'rous Author of this ev'ning's story.  
No fancy'd piece I bring from Greece or Rome ;  
'Tis grounded upon fact, and found at home.

Oft have the tragic writers grac'd the stage  
With regal sorrows, or with sceptred rage :  
To humbler roofs my muse delights to go,  
Caught with sensations of domestic wo.  
Spurn not the subject, nor despise the plan,  
Because my hero is a poor plain man.  
The villager as poignant feeling knows,  
As underneath the ermin'd mantle glows.

My

My incidents, how'er receiv'd, are new,  
Copy'd from Nature's leaf, and wrote for you.  
To gain your generous plaudit was my aim,  
Your rich applause my wish'd-for goal of fame.

A gentle judgment to my firstling give ;  
And, though it merit censure, let it live.  
If in its op'ning bud some symptoms show  
Of future blossom, give it leave to blow ;  
With copious hand, into its leaves infuse  
Your genial warmth, and breathe propitious  
dews ;

And if, mature with age and culture grown,  
It fruit produces, 'twill be all your own.

### EPILOGUE.

## E P I L O G U E.

*Spoken by Mrs. JACKSON.*

Not speak an *Epilogue*! indeed I will :  
So rave and wrangle, rant and scold your fill.—  
Your kind applause has made our Bard so vain,  
That, as I live, I fear 'twill turn his brain.—  
Through five long acts to make me weep and  
rend,

And not one line of chit-chat at the end ?  
'Tis monstrous hard ; nay, out of reason too—  
Ladies—and Gents—I here appeal to you.—.

He says, 'Tis quite absurd,—'tis downright  
folly,

To chase away that pleasing melancholy,  
That feeling which the Tragic scenes impart  
To the mild, sympathizing, moral heart,  
By letting the pert muse come tripping after,  
Exciting ill-tim'd mirth and ribald laughter.  
Nay, maugre all I urge, in spite of vogue,  
He still refuses me an *Epilogue*.—

His plea 'mongst some starch'd Dons may  
converts gain,  
But with the major part 'twill prove in vain.  
Quite different sentiments I read among ye ;  
Consenting looks approve, I do not wrong ye.  
Then, since our Author needs so much inviting.  
You shall have one, that's flat, of my inditing.

The subject's obvious—I am to pray  
Your candour to preserve this infant play ;  
And yet I'm half inclin'd within myself,  
To beg you wou'd consign it to the shelf ;  
For,

## E P I L O G U E.

For, shou'd the bantling have the luck to please,  
Farewell to all my hopes of future ease.  
My spouse can never rest—To-morrow's sun  
Will view another Tragedy begun :  
Quebec's fam'd siege, with Wolfe's untimely fall;  
Wolfe *England's* glory, and the dread of Gaul:  
Or *Wallace*, *wight*, of an illustrious name ;  
*WALLACE*, the foremost on the lists of fame ;  
*WALLACE*, who nobly for his country fought,  
Who exil'd Liberty impatient sought,  
And to her vacant throne the banish'd goddesses  
brought.

Then, mercy on me—Ladies—if you know it,  
Rather lead apes in hell, than wed a poet.

'Tis inconceivable the life I've led,  
Since love of scribbling seiz'd my husband's  
head ;  
Moping alone the live-long day he sits,  
Gaping at space—as if he'd lost his wits.—  
When summon'd down with—Dinner waits, my  
dear—  
Hente hell-hounds ! hence (he'd bawl) ven-  
geance is near.—  
And, ere I can recover my surprise,  
Chill'd are the pullets, or stone-cold the pies.

Oft has he wak'd me in the dead of night,  
My life half gone with terror and affright.  
Ope go the curtains, to his desk he flies :  
I've got a thought, a noble thought, he cries.  
The lamp's gone out—quick, strike the latent  
spark,  
Else I shall lose the sentence in the dark.—

Nor since his piece was finish'd, have I quiet.  
Lank grows his visage, for untouched's his  
diet.—

What

## E P I L O G U E. xi

What ails my love? why do you look so  
grief'd?—

I wonder how my Play will be receiv'd.—

Courage, I cry; yourself have often known,  
In early years, the candour of the Town.

Frequent they strove your drooping pow'rs to  
cheer,

To curb each doubt, and check the rising fear:  
And surely now you'll more indulgence find;  
For I'll request it, and they must be kind.  
Each Critic shall his noisy cat-call spare,  
For Critics have been soften'd by the fair.

Ye dread of poets, then, where'er you fit,  
Above, around, or rang'd in your own pit;  
Make good my promise now;—and you shall see,  
That, in return, I'll not ungrateful be.

## DRAMATIS

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

As performed at LONDON.

COVENT-GARDEN. HAY-MARKET.

LOCRINE.	Mr. Hill.	Mr. Fearon.
BRENNUS.	Mr. Aicken.	Mr. Whitefield.
ELDRED.	Mr. Jackson.	Mr. Jackson.
ELIDURE.	Mr. Lewis.	Mr. Dinnick.
MORGAN.	Mr. Thompson.	Mr. Lane.
ELIUD.	Mr. Young.	Mr. Davis.
EDWENA.	Mrs. Jackson.	Mrs. Jackson.
ELIZA.	Miss Ambrose.	Miss Ambrose.

Guards, Servants, &c.

As performed at EDINBURGH and DUBLIN.

EDINBURGH.

DUBLIN.

LOCRINE.	Mr. Taylor.	Mr. Brennan.
BRENNUS.	Mr. Williamson.	Mr. Raymond.
ELDRED.	Mr. Jackson.	Mr. Jackson.
ELIDURE.	Mr. Cautherly.	Mr. Johnson.
MORGAN.	Mr. Knight.	Mr. King.
ELIUD.	Mr. Hallion.	Mr. Lee.
EDWENA.	Mrs. Jackson.	Mrs. Jackson.
ELIZA.	Mrs. Woods.	Mrs. Williams.

Guards, Servants, &c.

DRAMATIS



# BRITISH FREEHOLDER.

A C T I

S C E N E. A Grove.

The Curtain rising slowly to the symphony, discovers  
EDWENA, who sings.

HAIL, god of war ! to thee I sing ;  
Assuage my piercing woe :  
My *Elidur* from dangers bring ;  
O save him from the foe !

Till he return, each pleasing shade  
But aggravates my pain ;  
In vain I seek the matted glade,  
The zephyr breathes in vain.

Cease, Philomel, thy lovely song,  
Thy warbling charms no more ;  
The chanting of the flutt'ring throng  
My peace can ne'er restore.

The dimpled rills that purl around,  
In fruitless numbers play ;  
Give o'er your soothing plaintive sound,  
My *Elidur*'s away.

[Comes forward, and speaks.  
B Cease,

Cease, cease my song. In vain thy numbers strive  
 To chace away this melancholy gloom,  
 Whose sable mantle, shadowing the soul,  
 Presents a dreary prospect to the sight,  
 And spreads o'er Nature's works a dusky hue.  
 Why glows the blushing rose? Why flow'st the  
 thorn?

Why is the vale in verdant honours clad?  
 Sorrow's sad winter plucks their glories down,  
 And all things fade beneath my sick'ning wo,  
 To bloom, I fear, no more.—

*Enter E. L. I. Z. A.*

*Eliza.* Why thus alone?  
 When through the houſe the face of gladneſs reigns,  
 Why thus do you this solitary walk  
 Inceſſant keep?

*Edwena.* Why, doſt thou ſay? Alas!  
 Why ſhou'd I not? Shou'd gaiety relax  
 The ſad contracted furrows of my brow,  
 Then might'ſt thou wonder. Shame itſelf wou'd  
 bluſh.

To view a cheerful ſmile upon my face,  
 While Fate, impending on the Saxon points  
 Shakes o'er the land; while friends and kinſmen  
 fall

Before the cruel foe.

*Eliza.* None more than I  
 Have reaſon to lament the rage of war.  
 I've felt its force. But now, the ſtorm blown  
 o'er,

The thunder paſt'd, and growling from afar,  
 In diſtant murmurs hushing to a calm,  
 Why ſhou'd we fear the angry bolt, or dread  
 The lightning's foreeful flash? Hengift no more  
 Lays waste our fruitful vales; great Vortimer  
 Now gleans his ſcatter'd ranks; while Brennus  
 here,  
 Ev'n in your father's house, bids ſafety welcome,  
 And peace return again.

*Edwenda*

*Edwena.* Behold those fields—  
 How wild, how desolate their furrows show !  
 See that forsaken green, where erst the youths,  
 In sportive gambols, chanc'd the hours away.  
 No sports are there ; no human accents sound  
 To rouse imprison'd Echo from her cell,  
 Save some lone widow's wailing for her child,  
 Her husband murder'd, or her father slain.  
 Does this betoken peace ? Yon lonely cot,  
 Once the gay mansion of the loveliest youth  
 That grac'd our Cambrian plains, where blyth  
 content

And festive gladness dwelt, neglected now,  
 But one poor venerable man contains,  
 Whose nerveless arm no more the state can serve :  
 Silent he sits beneath the lowly roof,  
 And wishful watches for his son's return.

*Eliza.* I wou'd not pry too deep into your  
 thoughts ;  
 Your country's woes hang heavy on your mind :  
 But (or I'm much deceiv'd) a nearer tie  
 Claims your attention, and demands your care.  
 That youth has charms ; and you, too, have a  
 heart.

*Edwena.* Come near, Eliza.—Thou hast touch'd  
 the wound  
 Which rankles in my bosom. Yes, Eliza,  
 (I think I may unfold my heart to thee,  
 And safely lodge within thy faithful breast  
 My secret thoughts), in that dear absent youth  
 Centres the sum of all my hopes and wishes.  
 That Eliud're—my husband.

*Eliza.* Gracious powers !  
 That is a circumstance beyond suspicion :  
 Tho' oft I've mark'd you partial in his praise,  
 And read your secret wishes in your looks ;  
 Yet still I thought the lowness of his rank  
 An obstacle not easy to surmount.

*Edwena.* Virtues like his set Fortune at defi-  
 ance,

Outsoar distinctions, and make envy dumb.  
 Hear then the story of our loves. The moon  
 Has scarce five times her monthly orbit run,  
 Since Dovey's streams in sanguine torrents flow'd,  
 And let proud Hengist pass. Our heroes fled.  
 Fierce came the Saxon on. The hoary fire,  
 The helpless mother, and the speechless babe,  
 Fell victims to the ruthless rage of war.

*Eliza.* Alas! forgive me, Madam, if a while  
 I interrupt your story, and give vent  
 To tears that still involuntary stream  
 On mention of that day ; that fatal day  
 Which saw my father fall, and me cast out  
 A poor and helpless orphan to the world.

*Edwena.* Dry up thy tears; thou hast a parent  
 here.

While life remains to animate this clay,  
 Whate'er my lot, my fortune thou shalt share,  
 My sister and my friend !—But let me on,  
 Flight was our only hope ; fear lent us wings,  
 And Snowdon's cliffs first saw the stragglers halt.  
 To reach the safest bulwark of the hill,  
 A river must be pass'd ; whose pent-up tide,  
 Dashing from rock to rock, rag'd foaming down.  
 A tree transverse was laid ; o'er which we sought,  
 By mutual aid, to reach the farther bank.  
 The midway gain'd, my head in giddy turn  
 Ran fearful round. Trembling, my hold I lost ;  
 When, falling headlong in the rapid gulph,  
 The roaring billows bore me senseless down.  
 My father cried for help.—Astonish'd stood  
 The stupefied beholders.—Elidure  
 Alone had courage to oppose the stream,  
 And save thy sinking friend. Fearless, he rush'd  
 Into the flood. His right-hand grasp'd a rock ;  
 His left firm held me on the water's verge,  
 Till aid was brought to lift me to the shore.

*Eliza.* Brave youth! that noble act indeed demands  
 Your warmest gratitude.

*Edwena.*

*Edwena.* Hadst thou beheld,  
 When, glowing through my veins, rekindling life,  
 Like a new morning, crimson'd o'er my cheek,  
 What mix'd emotions sat on every brow,  
 Of wonder and of joy. Returning day  
 My opening eyes relum'd. O then my friend !  
 What words can paint the feelings of my soul !  
 The trembling youth, still clasping in his arms  
 His prize preserv'd, uprear'd me from the earth,  
 And to a parent gave his rescued child.  
 Kind Heav'n, he cried, watch o'er my gracious lord.  
 And ever thus from peril save your house.  
 My father thank'd him. Thanks, methought, seem'd  
 poor,

Cold from the heart, to one who anxious stood,  
 My life's redeemer, and my guardian God.

*Eliza.* What else but love cou'd recompence that  
 deed,

Or half repay such worth ?

*Edwena.* Eliza, no.  
 Love's soft sensations in my virgin-breast  
 Found yet no harbour. Gratitude alone,  
 And friendly feelings, throb'd around my heart—  
 At Glass-Lynn's narrow pass our troops first knew  
 That Hengist cou'd be conquer'd. Vortimer,  
 Collecting there his scatter'd force, resolv'd  
 To make one last effort, or to redress  
 His country's wrongs, or bravely sell his life.  
 The Gods look'd kindly on : his arm prevail'd ;  
 And drove the haughty Saxon, vanquish'd, back.  
 This gave us to our homes : but on our way,  
 While our hot youth chanc'd the retiring foe,  
 A band in ambush clos'd upon the rear,  
 And well nigh turn'd the fortune of the day ;  
 When Eliudre, still watchful o'er thy friend,  
 With more than mortal arm withstood their charge,  
 Till strength arriv'd, and drove th' assailants off.  
 In this last conflict Eliudre receiv'd  
 A dang'rous wound, which kept him many days  
 Confin'd at home a stranger to the war.  
 Here, my Eliza, here it was I felt

The softer passion thrilling through my soul,  
To bring relief, I sought his father's house ;  
Where oft, with wonder, I beheld his worth,  
His valiant aspect, and his honest heart ;  
Heard the mild accent tremble on his tongue ;  
Read the soft silent wishes in his eye ;  
And look'd, and sigh'd, and reason'd into love.

*Eliza.* When this shall be divulg'd, I dread —

*Edwena.* Thy thoughts

I guess, and will anticipate thy fears.  
Our lots in life so distant had been cast,  
That it was scarce permitted me to make  
A friendly visit to his father's roof,  
Ev'n after all the service he had done me.  
How then cou'd I expect a father's sanction  
To grace our nuptial rites ? By this induc'd,  
We strove to keep our marriage still unknown  
To all, except the venerable fire  
Who tied the sacred knot, till time should give  
Some luckier crisis to disclose the secret.

*Eliza.* Be well assur'd, it closely shall remain  
Deep lodg'd within the foldings of my heart ;  
Not death itself shall force it from my lips.

*Edwena.* My present confidence declares how much  
I think thee faithful to me. But new fear  
Thy counsel claims, and calls thee to my aid.

*Eliza.* Command my service, and my life.

*Edwena.* This chief,  
The warlike leader of Menevia's band,  
Who waits but to refresh his weary men,  
To lead 'em onward to the Cambrian camp,  
His prince's fav'rite, and my father's friend,  
Whose presence spreads festivity around,  
Brings double-weight of misery to me.

*Eliza.* I own I thought his presence welcome to  
you.

The man who draws his sword in freedom's cause,  
Should find a friend in every honest breast.

*Edwena.* So did he once in mine ; so should he  
still,  
If he but came in friendship's pleasing garb :

But

But oh ! I fear he wears another form,  
A form most blasting to my tortured view,  
The baneful form of love.

*Eliza.* That were indeed  
A circumstance most dreadfully alarming,  
But see he comes ; and with him too your sire,  
In earnest conversation.

*Edwena.* Yes, my friend ;  
And on their dread resolves, the life or death  
Of poor Edwena rests. Hear me, good Heav'n !  
Avert the direful stroke my fears suggest :  
Or, if I must be tortur'd with his love,  
With tenfold resolution arm my soul ;  
Teach me to ward the meditated blow,  
Or strengthen me to bear a father's rage.  
Preserve me virtuous ; yield me spotless up,  
Pure and unsully'd, to a husband's arms.  
And now methinks I can endure the blast,  
And weather out the fury of the storm.

*Enter BRENNUS and LOCRINE.*

*Locrine.* I sought you, daughter. Why in silent  
mood  
Dost thou neglect the converse of thy friends,  
Quitting the pleasures of the social hour,  
To visit this wild solitary gloom ?  
The times, and our own exigence, require  
That I consult thee on a serious point,  
On which our future happiness depends.  
I have no child but thee ; and fain my eyes  
Would gaze upon a prattling race of thine,  
Whose infant-gambols might assuage the pain  
Of sick'ning age, and rising to the war,  
Under the eye of a renown'd sire,  
Learn to defend the liberty they prize.  
This gallant chief, our guest, of noble race,  
Possesses all my ardent wishes form ;  
I choose him for my son. My choice, I hope,  
Will also prove acceptable to you.

*Edwena.*

*Edwena.* My father, I am your's, at your high will,

And no alternative remains for me.

Yet, as it is a matter of such moment,—

So unexpected too—Your arm, Eliza?—

*Loorraine.* How fares my child?—*Edwena!*—

*Edwena.* Sir, your pardon.—

My scatter'd spirits crave a moment's pause;

Permit me to withdraw. {*Exit with ELIZA.*

*Brennus.* Suspicion tells me,  
Your daughter's wishes, adverse to our hopes,  
Will prove a bar to my expected bliss,  
Security o'erlook'd.

*Loctrine.* Your doubts are vain.

'Twas but her virgin terror; fearful moist,  
Of what she most desires. "Twill soon away.  
However, to dispel your apprehension,  
I'll follow, and endeavour to remove  
The weight which now depresses her young spirits;  
That, when you see her next, she may receive  
Your proffer'd vows, with kindness, and with love,

*Brennus.* I'll take a view of the adjoining vale,  
And follow straight.—{*Exit LOCRINE.*

Her maiden fear!—Perhaps

It may be so. I oft-times have observ'd,  
When sudden palpitations from the heart,  
Of joy excessive, grief or quick surprise,  
Shoot through the quiv'ring fibres of the flesh;  
The lazy blood creeps slowly thro' the veins,  
Dams up each sluice, and for a moment stops  
The active pow'rs of life. Who's there?

### Enter MORGAN.

*Morgan.* My lord! my master!

*Brennus.* Raise thee from the earth,  
My soldier, and my friend! But say, from whence?  
I thought thee dead.

*Morgan.* So was I thought by all,  
I fell, and senseless lay upon the field;—  
Some feeble symptoms of remaining life

Were

Were seen by one who kindly rais'd me up;  
 Convey'd me to a cot, and soon restor'd  
 My wonted strength. I follow'd to the war,  
 But found you not : there waiting your arrival,  
 Too near the foe incautious I advanc'd,  
 And, captive made, was carried to their camp.

*Brennus.* Dispatch'd by Vortimer to scour the  
 vales

That southward lie ; returning here, my troops,  
 With sickness and repeated toil o'ercome,  
 Demanded rest. But how hast thou escap'd ?

*Morgan.* Hengist, to gain some knowledge of our  
 strength,

Commanded me before him ; where, consign'd  
 Unto the rack, I told whate'er I knew.  
 On naming you, the Saxon offer'd life,  
 Nay, promis'd too, advancement and rewards,  
 Cou'd I with you promote a private league  
 Of amity.—

*Brennus.* Of amity !

*Morgan.* My lord,  
 Beset with perils, what cou'd I refuse ?  
 This paper my commission will unfold.

[*Gives a letter to BRENNUS.*

### B R E N N U S reads.

" Greeting, and health, the Saxon king pre-sents  
 " To Brennus, the renowned British chief ;  
 " Whose wisdom dreaded, and whose valour tried,  
 " Persuade him to promote and seek his friendship.  
 " The bearer will convey the terms to

*HENGIST.*"

What terms ? propos'd he nothing ?

*Morgan.* No, my lord :  
 He bid you stipulate your own conditions ;  
 Declaring, nothing your desires can form,  
 Out-stepping not the circle of his pow'r,  
 Shall stop the league he meditates.

*Bren-*

*Brennus.* Inform me,  
For thou hast view'd their host, and best can judge ;  
Dost thou believe the Saxons can prevail  
O'er Vortimer's successful bands ?

*Morgan.* Too sure,  
If human reason can suggest, they must.  
E'en now, not far from Mouthy's ruined walls,  
In sight of our long harass'd ranks, they lie  
Entrench'd in many a bulwark ; and but wait  
Th' arrival of an army on its march,  
To pour, once more, in torrents o'er the land.

*Brennus.* To-morrow thou shalt bear our answer  
back :

Mean time, while you refresh your weary'd limbs,  
I'll meditate, and give thee my resolves.

*Morgan.* I'm ever at your call.

*Brennus.* Anon I'll see thee.—[Exit MORGAN.  
Conjoin with Hengist, or embrace the fate  
Of Vortimer ? Which way shall I resolve ?  
The one comes fraught with death, and fame un-  
felt.

To grace my senseless clay : The other stamps  
Disgrace upon my name, but promises  
A lengthen'd life of pleasure and of pow'r.  
Yet who shall speak in censure, or in praise ?  
My country earnag'd, who shall sound my deeds,  
Or point the place that yielded me a grave ?  
The Saxon join'd, and feated in my strength,  
Who'll dare to mention the insidious act  
Which lifted me to grandeur ?—Then, to die,  
Or to survive, is the great doubt within.  
And can I quit the harvest of my joy,  
With plenteous produce whit'ning to my view,  
Smiling with ease, and rip'ning into bliss ?

No : I'll renounce the shock of war's alarms,  
And find my peace in fair Idwena's arms ;  
Sport o'er the mountain, range the flow'ry grove,  
And revel in the sweets of social love.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T

## A C T II.

S C E N E, A Hall.

L O C R I N E. *Solus.*

**T**H E more I think, the more I am convinc'd,  
**T**hat something nearer hangs around her heart,  
 Than virgin terrors, or the sudden shock  
 Which unexpected rous'd her youthful fears.  
 Oft have I mark'd th' involuntary tear  
 Spring in her pensive eye, while all alone  
 Silent she sought the thickest of the grove.  
 Reprov'd, and question'd of the cause, she gave  
 As reason for her sadness, that the fears  
 Of hostile dangers not yet quite subsided,  
 Depress'd thole sprightly fallies, that were wont  
 To spread soft mirth and pleasantry around.  
 Still I believ'd her, 'till on this occasion  
 Her strong emotions stagger'd my opinion.  
 This rustic youth who serv'd her in our flight,  
 Has surely wrought upon her grateful heart.—  
 Away, detested thought—her dignity  
 Would save her from a passion so unworthy,  
 So mean and grov'ling in the world's regard.  
 This interview she promises with Brennus,  
 Must soon, however, clear these anxious doubts.  
 But hold—he comes—he must not know my fears.

*Enter B R E N N U S.*

Your walk, my friend, was longer than expected.  
 No accident, I hope, detain'd you from us?

*Brennus.* The pleasing scenes, romantic to the view,  
 Farther entic'd me onwards through the vale,  
 Regardless of the hours.—Your daughter's health  
 Ere this, I hope, is mended?

*Locrine.* Quite restor'd.  
 But much she grieves the ill-tim'd accident  
 Which forc'd her so abruptly to depart,

And

24

And speedily in person means to plead  
Her own excuse.

*Brennus.* I shall attend her will—With anxious joy,

*Locrine.* All doubts will vanish then.

But tell me, Sir, how stand in your esteem  
The soil and situation of my lands?

*Brennus.* The best I ever look'd on; far extend  
Beyond my ken the bounds of your possessions.

*Locrine.* The vales that meet beneath those flant-  
ing groves,

And thence meand'ring cleave the pebbled beach,  
From whence the water issues from the sod  
Till in the briny flood its taste is lost,  
Acknowledge me their lord: one paltry farm  
Alone excepted, which maliciously  
Intrudes itself within my circling fence.  
That lowly roof beneath the tufted brow,  
With yon small wood, and those adjoining grounds  
That skirt the river downward to the bridge,  
As a foul wen upon the human frame  
Disfigures the soft touch of nature's work,  
So that small cot, offensive to the prospect,  
Lessens the beauty of my fair domain.

*Brennus.* 'Tis something strange, indeed, so small  
a tract,  
Close in your view, nay almost at your gate,  
Shou'd own another master: But to whom  
Does it belong?

*Locrine.* An obstinate old man,  
Who by his own hard labour thence extorts  
A bare subsistence, breeding up a son,  
An active youth, now in the Cambrian camp.

*Brennus.* Have you propos'd to purchase it?

*Locrine.* I have  
Most frequently; but still with fury pride  
He has refus'd.—There is no price, he cries,  
Can e'er prevail upon me to relinquish  
My little home, bequeath'd me by my poor,  
But honest father.—

*Brennus.* Take it then by force.—

*Enter*

*Enter S E R V A N T.*

Whence this intrusion?

*Servant.* Sir, from Vortimer  
A messenger, but now in haste arriv'd,  
Desires to be admitted.

*Brennus.* Bid him enter— [Exit Servant.  
We'll talk of that anon.]

*Locrine.* When it shall suit  
Your meetest leisure to resume the subject,  
I leave you to receive the royal mandate;  
Its purport may require your privacy.

*Brennus.* I have no secrets now apart from you;  
Retire not then through ceremonious form:  
He brings some news, perhaps.

*Locrine.* Whate'er his tidings,  
If such as may be trusted to my hearing,  
Yourself, at leisure, shall impart 'em to me.  
It should be so.

*Brennus.* In all things, you command. [Exit LOCRINE.

The king now sends to urge my march; to that,  
My answer is prepar'd at full.

*Enter E L I D U R E.*

*Elidure.* Great Sir,  
By royal Vortimer's command I come,  
Charg'd with the utmost speed to find you out,  
And in his highnes's name to greet you well.

*Brennus.* Declare his will.

*Elidure.* Thus then he bids me say:  
The rally'd Saxons with increasing numbers  
On Bedwin's summit still securely lie;  
Expecting, as by scouts he is inform'd,  
A pow'r'ful reinforcement; which arriv'd,  
Once more, 'tis thought, they mean to offer battle:  
He therefore wills you hasten to his aid  
With all your force.

*Brennus.* Commend me to my prince

In humblest terms of duty and respect—  
 Tell him, this expedition has so worn  
 My men with weary watchings and fatigue,  
 That I was fain to halt 'em here a while  
 To give 'em strength to prosecute their march.  
 Besides, a circumstance of private nature  
 Occasions some delay.

*Elidure.* What said you, Sir !  
 Of private nature ? — At a time like this  
 All private benefits are public frauds.  
 Perish the man, who, when his country calls  
 To snatch her from the gripe of fell oppression,  
 To save a wife, a parent, or a child,  
 From bondage or from death, would basely dare  
 But to indulge a thought for private ends,  
 His own preferring to the public weal.

*Brennus.* You are too bold, young man — learn  
 what becomes you.

*Elidure.* Your pardon, Sir; I meant not to  
 offend.

*Brennus.* Some three days hence, I may inform  
 the king

How soon my promis'd succours will arrive,  
 As then I shall have muster'd all my force.  
 You have your answer, Sir, and may depart.

*Elidure.* With all respect, I humbly take my  
 leave. [Exit ELIDURE.

*Brennus.* Who's there ? [Enter Servant.

*Servant.* My Lord.

*Brennus.* Send Morgan to my chamber.  
 I'll meet him there — The times require dispatch.

[Exit Servant.

In my resolves.—If I defer this league —  
 But soft — Edwena comes ! her sweet approach  
 Dispels all other thoughts ; and gently tunes  
 Each harsh alarm, to soft'ning sounds of love.

Enter  
 Edwena. How fair thou art, my dearest love ! — Enter  
 Morgan. Come hither, Morgan, and tell me  
 Whether all your forces —

*Enter LOC RINE and EDWENA.*

*Locrine.* I have been pleading in your favour,  
Sir, With all the mildness of a parent's love, And a fond father's soft severity.

*Brennus.* My life depends upon your suit.

*Locrine.* I leave Her to reply.—Daughter, you know my mind; Act as your duty and my peace require.

*Edwena.* I shall endeavour, Sir, to bear myself As it may best become me.

*Locrine.* That is well And kindly spoken. [Exit LOC RINE.]

*Brennus.* It o'erjoys me, Madam, To see your wonted spirits reassume Their kindly rule. Words wou'd attempt in vain To paint the anxious feelings of a heart That throbb'd for your relief.

*Edwena.* Your kind concern Demands from me my warmest thanks. I hope I stand excused, or blameless in your thoughts, For my so sudden and abrupt departure.

*Brennus.* Exce's'd, thou lovely fair one! what Escape from thee, (all perfect as thou art), In word or thought, requiring an excuse? I am a soldier, bred to hoarser sounds Than soothing notes of compliment and love; Else cou'd I dwell whole years upon thy praise, And, still untriv'd, prolong the rapt'rous theme. Yet, were I fraught with softest eloquence, The lapsing time permits no more than this: Your charms have caught my heart; your father's will

Kindly complies; and nothing now remains, But your concurrence, to complete my bliss.

*Edwena.* Thus low, I thank you for the honour meant me, Which far my little merit over-rates;

And, as I wish not to excite your hopes,  
 Or give you one unnecessary doubt,  
 With the same frankness you have used to me,  
 I'll freely ope the dictates of my soul.—  
 Know, then, our hearts were never formed to join  
 In the kind cordial ties of nuptial love.  
 If, therefore, the few graces I can boast,  
 View'd by your partial eye, have lighted up  
 A pure, disinterested, noble flame;  
 Display that in-born virtue of the mind,  
 Now show the friend, th' admirer and the man.

My father bids me listen to your suit,  
 Or forfeit ever his paternal favour.  
 O save me, then, from the severest ill  
 That can befall a child! from the hard need  
 Of thwarting a fond parent in his hopes.  
 Thus prostrate, (*kneeling*) I implore you to devise  
 Some means to frustrate this intended union,  
 Some obstacle as rising from yourself;  
 And leave me here, as when your eyes first view'd  
 me,

The dutieus daughter of a tender sire.

*Brennus.* This posture ill becomes thee, charming  
 fair;—Rise, powerful pleader.—By my country's gods,  
 The more thou talk'st against my growing passion,  
 The more thou dost endear thee to my love,  
 How shall I soften thy obdurate heart,  
 And work upon thy will?—For life itself  
 Were vain, and worthless, if possess'd without  
 thee.

Thou shalt be mine.—Produce that pow'r on earth  
 Shall dare to snatch thee from my ravish'd hopes.

*Edwena.* A pow'r thou wilt not contradict.

*Brennus.* Name it.

*Edwena.* Thy own resolves.

*Brennus.* Thou speak'st in riddles.

*Edwena.* Let me  
 Expond 'em to thee:—know, my heart's engag'd,  
 And my whole soul devoted to another.

*Brennus.* Perdition to my hopes!

*Ed-*

*Edwena.* And though, I fear,  
I am not to expect within thy breast  
A kind compunction for my keen distress,  
Yet wilt thou have some feeling for thyself,  
Nor wish to keep the mansion of a heart,  
Its owner not within.

*Brennus.* I'll hazard that ;  
The person once secur'd, the mind may stay,  
Or follow it at leisure.—Well I know,  
The childish fondness of this love-fit gone,  
And girlish prejudices once remov'd,  
Thou'l thank me for the kind compulsion done  
    thee.

*Edwena.* Insulting man !—

*Brennus.* But show me this admir'd,  
This happy wretch.—I'll set aside my pow'r,  
And fairly meet in arms this favour'd rival,  
That we may prove who best deserves thy love.

*Edwena.* Thou canst not meet him upon equal  
terms :—intolerable day  
His fires would dash intolerable day  
Around thy drooping flame ;—his valour wou'd  
Appal thee with its touch ;—his virtue shine  
Above thy worth, as Heav'n surpasses earth.

*Brennus.* I'd meet this man of men, and face  
these odds.  
One great advantage gleaming on my side  
Out-weighs a giant's strength :—thou dost forget,  
A father's sanction and a father's will  
Declare for me, and both shall be exerted  
To force thy stubborn temper to compliance.

[*Exit BRENNUS.*

*Edwena.* Exert 'em, then ;—strain ev'ry boasted  
art,  
To rouse a parent's rage :—still shalt thou find  
How well a woman's heart, enthron'd in truth,  
Will fearless dare thee to the hateful test.

[*Exit EDWENA.*

### C 3 SCENE

And as I wish much I might have him  
**S C E N E** a Grove, &c. of 100 yrs.  
 With the old oak now no longer standing A  
**Enter ELIDURE.**

What is the cause, I cannot well divine ;  
 But from my heart I do not like this Brennus.  
 There's something, surely, couch'd in his reply  
 Beyond my fathom.— Yet I was to blame,  
 To shew my warmth so much on the occasion.—  
 But still, I know not how, resistless flows  
 The swelling indignation through my veins,  
 Prompting my youthful tongue, whene'er I find  
 Such lukewarm languor in my country's cause,  
 His forces unrefresh'd—of private nature !  
 And such a cold reply.— But let it rest  
 A while.— One moment I may surely spare,  
 Uncensur'd by my country, or my king,  
 To the all-pow'rful ties of yearning nature,  
 To glad the eye of an indulgent parent,  
 And snatch one tender look from a fond wife  
 Who pines in secret for my wish'd return.  
 I'm told she pass'd this way ;—she visits, sure,  
 The oaken grove.— I'll seek the well-known shade,  
 To find the drooping fair, to ease her doubts,  
 And clasp her in a husband's fond embrace.

[Exit ELIDURE.]

**S C E N E** another part of the same grove.  
**Another part of the GROVE.**

**Enter EDWENA** crossing the stage, and sitting down upon a green bank.

**Edwena.** Welcome, thou sylvan scene, thou leafy  
 grove, Beneath whose silent shade my Elidure  
 In accents bland oft op'd his copious heart,  
 Teeming with virtuous love.— Thou hoary oak  
 His faithful confidant, thy moss-grown ribs,  
 Significant in look, speak to my soul

Firm.

Firmness and strength ; — and pensive in thy gloom,  
 Thou spread'st a sympathizing shade around,  
 Grateful to melancholy.— Here sit me down,  
 Here mourn my luckless fate, and weep  
 The absence of my love, my lord, my Elidure.

*Enter E L I D U R E.*

*Elidure.* Behold him at thy feet.

*Edwena.* Ye gracious powers !

*Elidure.* Compose thyself, my love ! — dismiss thy  
 doubts ;  
 Thy Elidure returns in safety back,  
 To gaze with transport on thy beauteous form,  
 And press thee in the circling folds of love.

*Edwena.* And art thou then ? — and art thou  
 surely here ?  
 I can't persuade my eyes to think this real.  
 Let me look on thee — 'Tis, I'm not deceiv'd,  
 It is my love, my life, my dear, dear husband !  
 Just at this time, propitious pow'rs ! to lend him ;  
 It is too much to bear ; the rapt'rous bliss  
 Attacks my brain ; I shall run mad with joy.

*Elidure.* My all of life ! my everlasting love !  
 Thou soft, thou bright inspirer of my soul !  
 Try to divest thee of these dear emotions,  
 And let this storm, this wild excess of rapture,  
 Subside into the smooth of Reason's calm ;  
 For we must early part.

*Edwena.* Part ! — said'st thou, Part ?  
 O show me not Elysium's blissful plains,  
 Then blast me with a prospect drear and wild.  
 No, we will part no more — Here will I hold thee ;  
 Not here a father's menaces can reach me.

*Elidure.* Hear me, my life — Thy passions crowd  
 thy sight  
 With fancy'd ills. — I go but to remove  
 Those bars which hold from me thy father's sanction  
 To take thee to my arms. — The smiling Gods  
 Have crown'd already, with successful deeds,  
 My youthful efforts ; — and, inspir'd by thee,

The

The little service I have done my prince  
Has gain'd his early notice. Hither sent I was  
His messenger, to come to hasten Brennus.

*Edwena. Brennus!*

*Elidure. What means that sudden start, Edwena,*  
*On mention of that name?*

*Edwena. Nothing, my love.*

*Elidure. Nay, but it does; else why more faintly  
glows*

*The ruby of thy lip? why silent steal*

*Those pearly drops adown thy lovely cheeks?*

*Edwena. I fear'd new teeming dangers to the  
state*

*Had caus'd this sudden message to the chief.*

*Elidure. I know that is not all; for dangers long  
Have been familiar to thy fearful ear.*

*Then, by our loves, by our chaste nuptial rites,  
And by a husband's tie upon thy will,*

*Relate the whole that preys upon thy soul.*

*Edwena. Forgive me that I wish'd to hide my  
suff'ring,  
And to conceal from thee a circumstance  
Full fraught with terrifying doubts.*

*Elidure. Be quick,  
And O relieve me of my pain.*

*Edwena. Know then—*

*Alas! my tears o'erflow, and choke my words.*

*Elidure. I charge thee, speak; my doubts will  
else distract me.*

*Edwena. Know then, our guest, ev'n from his  
first arrival,  
View'd me with looks that fill'd me with alarms.  
I form'd excuses to avoid his sight;  
Till, forc'd at last to listen to his tale,  
He shock'd me with a tender of his love.*

*Elidure. Down, down, rebelling rage!—Go on,  
go on.*

*Edwena. Repell'd he still persisted in his suit,  
Nor heeded the engagements of my heart;  
Ev'n dar'd, beneath the sanction of a parent,  
To threaten me with an enforc'd espousal.*

*Elidure.*

*Elidure.* Hear me, great Heav'n!—O strike him instant dead; Or if some plagues, beyond all human ken, Conceal'd, remain in your great hoard of vengeance, Edge them with pains acute, and let them pour In aggravated horrors on his head.

*Edwena.* Nay, now you are too rash; let patience rule.

*Elidure.* Away with patience! 'tis a vice misplac'd. When force wou'd violate a husband's right, The gift of patience were the loss of honour. Can I behold thee lovely as thou art, My life's best gem, the treasure of my soul, Torn from me by the sacrilegious hand Of brutal violation—calmly look on, And view the dire disgrace with tame submission! No: ye just ruling gods, fill me brim-full With great revenge.

*Edwena.* These passions rend my soul. Why will you fly into such gusts of rage? How easy we to others counsel give, But want it in our own sore time of need. My little transports, at thy dear return, Were interruptions to the lesser claims Of Time's necessity: yet when thou see'st Superior terrors black'ning o'er our heads, Fearfully dreadful, rashly to give way To Fury's frantic force, when o'er the mind Fair Prudence shou'd exert her wisest sway! To free us from these terrifying doubts, Believe me, love, 'tis wrong, it is unkind.

*Elidure.* Chide on, my love;—let me offend again. Again to hear the mild severity, In soothing accents, soften on thy tongue.—I could recline me on this gentle bosom Till I forget the dangers that surround us; No more remember the dismal bars That thwart our nuptial loves.—O speak!

*Edwena.* Thy warmth wou'd not permit me to relate, That Brennus knows not where my heart is lodg'd; Which

Which shelters thee from his severe displeasure.  
 That circumstance but in our last extremity  
 Must be reveal'd.—Soon as the hazy ev'ning  
 Has spread o'er Idris' top her twilight wing,  
 Where yon brown rock o'erhangs the busy brook,  
 There will I meet thee :—but before I come,  
 I'll try my utmost efforts with my father  
 To shun this union, or at least defer  
 The hated purpose 'till the chief's return.  
 Meanwhile, perhaps, the gods may raise thy name  
 By some great act achiev'd against the foe ;  
 For which my pray'rs to heaven shall still be pour'd ;  
 When, soaring high with valour and renown,  
 Thou may'st look downward upon Lozine's daughter.

*Elidure.* By heav'n the thought dilates my young  
 ideas,  
 And, with high boding hopes, uplifts my soul,  
 Expanding into glory. God of war !  
 Inspire the dastard foe to leave the holds  
 In which they lurk ; that, slogging from the ranks  
 Their tow'ring chief, undaunted I may rush,  
 Tear from his helm the variegated plume,  
 And shew whose veins, Hengist's or mine,  
 In nobler currents bear the circling blood.

*Edwena.* I know thou wilt : and I, perhaps may  
 see it ;  
 May view thee lovely in the ranks of war,  
 Behold the smile of conquest on thy brow ;  
 And, mingling in the cheerful sounds of peace,  
 Around thy temples twine the wreath of glory.  
 For shou'd my sire, inexorable still,  
 Relentless view my sorrows and my tears,  
 I'll meet thee, love, to share thy doubtful fate,  
 And, through the dark vicissitudes of life,  
 Embrace thy perils, or partake thy joys.  
 But now the time forbids thee to reply,  
 An envious eye, malignant to our wishes,  
 Might blast our fairest hopes. Retire, my love ;  
 Anon we meet again.

*Elidure.* How durst thou say so ?  
 I have injur'd you only to avoid snarling dogs.

*Elidure.* Thou wilt not fail ?  
*Edwena.* If life remains, I will not. Fare thee

well.

*Elidure.* Let me not wait thee long.

*Edwena.* Thou shalt not, love. I'll seize the first occasion to retire ; That, if necessity requires our flight, Ere morning dawns we may escape the search Of all inquiry.

*Elidure.* Dearest life, adieu— Kind heav'n, that guards the virtuous, watch thy steps, And O preserve and take thee to its care !

[Exit ELIDURE.]

*Edwena.* Amen.—Protect me, Pow'rs ! for now draws on The crisis of my fate.—Shrink not, my heart ! A husband's comfort, and thy own existence, Are now at stake ;—for them thou art to plead.

Teach me, great Nature ! thy all-pow'ful skill, To sooth the rigour of a parent's will ; With duteous firmness his resolves to move, And melt him with the tears of filial love. [Exit.

### A C T III.

#### S C E N E, A Hall.

*Enter BRENNUS, a Servant following.*

B R E N N U S.

G O tell your master I attend him here.—[Ex. Ser.  
 She must, and shall, be mine ; for O I feel  
 Her charms have rais'd a flame within my soul,  
 Which nothing but possession can allay !  
 If I can urge her father to pursue

H

midw A

His present purpose, her unyielding heart  
 Shall nought deter me. Should he waver once,  
 I have the will and means to make her mine;  
 And Hengist's favour sets me above fear.  
 But that must be my ultimate resource;  
 I thereby forfeit the esteem of Loerine,  
 And quit perhaps pretensions to her fortune.—  
 No trifling object that.—No, I must try  
 All means to keep the father in my favour.—  
 This farm he covets!—that may something work  
 To fix him mine. Its owner shall consent,  
 Or plead his grievance in the world below.  
 The father comes. Can I persuade him once  
 To fix an early period for our marriage,  
 I shall not fear to keep him to his word.

*Enter LOCRINE.*

*Loerine.* My noble friend, I wait upon your will.

*Brennus.* Your beauteous daughter, Sir.

*Loerine.* Is your's. Henceforth I call you son.

*Brennus.* Heav'n and my raptur'd heart  
 Only can tell how much the honour'd sound  
 Delights my ears. But, Sir, the lady's choice—

*Loerine.* Her choice! how is her giddy choice concern'd

Where a wise father's just and prudent will,  
 Matur'd with reason, by experience form'd,  
 Directs her lot in life?—This girlish flame,  
 By childish folly fed, will soon evaporate  
 In mild reflection—quench'd by nuptial love  
 And your endearing fondness.

*Brennus.* May I ask, Who is this rival of my hopes?

*Loerine.* As yet

I have not learn'd; nor in her present temper  
 Choose I to make inquiry. If suspicion  
 Wou'd let me guess, it is a beardless boy,  
 Who in our expedition did her service,

A whim

A whim of childish gratitude, forsooth,  
Not worth our notice.

*Brennus.* You have seen her then,  
It seems, since our late interview?

*Locrine.* I have;  
And from herself distinctively receiv'd  
Your conversation's purport. Now I left her  
With solemn charge, and fatherly injunction  
To reconcile her wishes to her duty,  
And to prepare for her approaching nuptials.

*Brennus.* How shall I thank you for your ge-  
nerous aid  
Thus kindly interposing in my favour?

*Locrine.* No more, my son. My wishes are  
o'erpaid  
By adding to the number of those names  
That grace my family, a man of worth,  
Of honour, and of courage to defend  
From hostile insults, or from private wrongs,  
My house's dignity.—Your worth once known,  
My daughter, red'ning with a conscious blush,  
Shall wonder at her childish efforts made  
To blast her worldly bliss.

*Brennus.* My utmost care  
Shall be exerted to deserve your favour,  
And win your daughter's love.

*Locrine.* I doubt it not.  
*Brennus.* But tell me, Sir; with anxious fear-  
fulness,  
I ask; Have you yet fix'd within your mind  
Our nuptial day? The messenger, but now  
In haste arriv'd, requests my speedy march;  
I cannot, therefore, long excuse my stay  
With just pretence.

*Locrine.* The third returning sun,  
With your consent, shall view the happy hour.

*Brennus.* Impatiently I wait the wish'd event,  
Mean time my place, my counsel, and my strength,  
Shall strain their weary'd faculties, to gain  
The ultimate completion of your wish.

*Enter a SERVANT.*

*Servant.* Old Eldred, Sir.—

*Locrine.* The man you wish'd to see,  
Conduct him in. We'll sound him on the subject,  
[Exit Servant.  
And form our future plan from the result.

*Enter ELDRED.*

*Eldred.* Health and good fortune crown the pros-  
p'rous days  
Of my great lord.—I fear I do intrude?—  
*Locrine.* Not so—thou art most welcome; tell  
me what  
Makes thee my house's visitor to-day?

*Eldred.* This morn, before the cock with cheer-  
ly note  
Had, thrice proclaiming, hail'd the coming day,  
And warn'd its master to his early care,  
I rose and listen'd to the teeming rain,  
And the loud whistling of the hollow blast  
That shook my little hovel—till, subsiding,  
The whit'ning clouds in sightless atoms fled,  
Presenting to my ken the gladsome blue,  
And Idris cliffs in glift'ning sun-beams clad.  
I pac'd the pasture slowly to the brook,  
Which then I found foaming in angry mood,  
And fighting with its banks—The boiling element  
Too quarrelsome my angle to admit,  
I could but look and wonder at the flood.  
Its mounds o'erpass'd, onward the torrent came,  
O'er-eddying my small mead—A rushy hill  
Yet nodded on the surge, within whose covert  
My aged eyes distinctly cou'd perceive  
A fearful hare—The trembling creature rose,  
And, leaning on the rushes for support,  
Fell frightened in—Plunging, she sought the land,  
Where anxiously I stood—Op'nning my arms,  
The little animal approach'd me near,  
And swam into my grasp.

*Locrine*

*Locrine.* Didst thou destroy it?

*Eldred.* Not for the boundless world--Poor fool!  
says I,

Thou know'st not where thou com'st. Cautious,  
thou shun'st

A wat'ry death, and swim'st to man for safety;  
Man, more destructive to thy timid race,  
Than all thy other enemies of nature....

But fear not me; there shall no harm come to thee:  
Had I the means, I'd fence for thee a field,  
Feed thee with care, and save thee from the gins  
Of savage mortals, or the hawk's fell pounce,...  
But all I can, I'll do.--I'll carry thee  
To a fair mistress, the belov'd Edwena.  
Thou'l be a partner for her little fawn,  
Eat from her snowy hand, and fearless hear  
The hallooing hunter or the op'ning hound....

*Locrine.* Hast thou yet seen my daughter?

*Eldred.* No, my lord;

I hear her health permits not.--Gracious Heav'n,  
Prolong her years, to bleſs your latter life  
With comfort and with joy!--

*Locrine.* Thanks, gentle Eldred.

Was it, old man,--when last I saw thee here...  
I think it was--we some time held discourse  
Concerning thy estate? Perhaps ere this  
Thou'st better thought: I'll still make good my offer.

*Eldred.* Why will you touch upon the only string  
That jars upon the sense? I've told you oft,  
My little hovel was my little all;  
My all of worldly wealth, my all of life....  
Suppose a stranger traversing these vales,  
That gentleman, for instance, or some other,  
And fancying the beauty of your house,  
Should say to you--This likes me for a home;  
Propose your price for it, and there's your gold--  
Would you relinquish your delightful spot,  
Your morning's pleasure, and your mid-day's joy,  
To waste your ev'ning in a land of sorrow?

*Locrine.* Thatcale is different.-----

*Eldred.* How differs it,

My lord, from mine ? It may in magnitude,  
But not in semblance.—This aspiring dome,  
Your blushing gardens, and your waving groves,  
Are not of more significance to you,  
Than are to me my lowly lattic'd shed,  
My taper'd holly, and my whit'ning thorn.

*Locrine.* Thy argument is founded upon error.  
My mansion quitted, cou'd not be replac'd  
With one more elegant, or useful to me :  
For thy mean cot, I offer thee such worth  
As wou'd procure for thee a fair retreat,  
Provide thee dainties, and prolong thy life  
With heartfelt ease and lasting happiness.

*Eldred.* With happiness ? can you ensure me  
that ?

I fear me, no !—that is not your's to give.  
Our happiness, concentrated in the mind,  
By no criterion can be fix'd or try'd ;  
Imperfect still in its most perfect state ;  
And to enjoy it pure, without alloy,  
Were not to be a mortal.—You, my lord,  
Though feasting at the table of profusion,  
With envious eye behold my oaten cake.—  
I with my frugal meal enjoy content,  
One step before you in the road to bliss ;  
But still there is a something unpossess'd—  
My son, my age's darling, facing death  
In ev'ry horrid shape, will force a sigh ;  
Will keep my eye unclos'd upon my pillow.

*Brennus.* 'Tis mine to aid thee there.—I can  
procure

His absence from the camp, and send him home.

*Eldred.* But how !—Ingloriously !—So judge me  
Heav'n !

I'd rather view him breathless on his bier,  
And tell the wounds upon his manly breast,  
Than see him loiter indolently here,  
When my great country's wrongs demand his  
fword.

*Brennus.* I'll give him honour, and promote his  
rank.

*Eldred.*

*Eldred.* Canst thou give him courage?—That's  
the staff

Of blooming glory.—Canst thou give him virtue?—  
That's the flag of fame.—Devoid of those,  
How canst thou give him honour?—having them,  
How canst thou hold it from him?—'Tis not, Sir,  
An empty sound, a feather, or a badge,  
But worth alone that dignifies the blood.—  
My boy, I hope, inherits that within,  
Will, unassisted, find its way to notice,  
Or my old lectures have been thrown away.—  
When these invaders threat'ned first our vales,  
My fword, in peace long rusting o'er the hearth,  
I buckled to his side, and gave this lesson—  
My son, thy country calls for aid—that sword,  
Once this old arm's acquaintance, seeks thy grasp.  
Unsheath'd, let strength and justice guide the blow.  
Victorious, still to mercy lend an ear;  
And if thy rising virtues ere shou'd call thee  
To the great nation's senate, then remember  
That honesty's thy only agent there—  
This makes the chief, the hero, and the man!

*Brennus.* This mode of speech ill suits thy poor  
beseeching,

And far out-soars the teachings of a rustic;  
Hast thou e'er served in battle?

*Eldred.* Yes, I have,  
And weather'd many a wearisome campaign;  
But not amidst these hills—Our streams were then  
Unting'd with native red—we fought the enemy  
Close at their ships. O that the youthful blood  
Wou'd, rolling back, re-animate these veins,  
As when on the Brigantian shore we fought  
Unequal numbers!—By your Sire I stood;  
A rocky fragment bore him prostrate down.  
Before him straight I plung'd into the waves;  
Up to my sides I plung'd.—The steely storm  
Burst harmless o'er my head.—Your father rose,  
Our ranks rejoin'd, and drove the frightened host  
To seek for safety in their floating tow'rs.—  
There at a distance had they view'd our land

With longing looks ; but foul intestine feuds  
Sapping our vitals, eat our sinews through,  
And gave a willing entrance to the foe.

*Locrine.* This circumstance I've heard from thee before ;  
'Tis foreign to our purpose.—

*Eldred.* Sir, your pardon ;  
You must excuse the foible of my years.  
Whene'er the conversation winds my thoughts  
To youthful recollection, from the heart  
The feeble stream that feeds my eve of life,  
In gurgling bubbles seeks its former course,  
With age long parch'd ; yet ere the crazy wheel  
Of motion turns, the wasting current stops.—  
Your leave, Sir, to withdraw.

*Locrine.* Thou wilt not then  
Comply with my request ?

*Eldred.* Let me not say,  
I will not ;—no, my kind Lord,—I cannot.—  
Heav'n turn your thoughts from wishing me such  
sorrow.

My father's shade wou'd haunt me for the deed.—  
His dying words I never can forget.—  
'Twixt broken groans, with faint'ring voice he cry'd,  
I soon must part with thee, my dearest Eldred,  
And all the comforts of my little home.  
In early days I drank some sweets of glory,  
And tasted too the bitters of a court.  
To find repose in the decline of life,  
I sought my rural cot, where soft content  
A frugal board, and thy dear company—  
Thou image of thy mother !—gave me bliss,  
In affluence unknown.—This scanty patrimony,  
All which the grasp of greedy faction left me—  
He wou'd have said—I charge thee still preserve—  
His look confess'd it : but a deep-sigh'd sigh  
Cut short his words, and shrouded him in death.  
Then let these eyes grow dim within the hatch,  
That wept my father's exit.—May you enjoy

Your days in ease, and may your last remains  
Rest with the relics of your sacred fires.

[*Exit ELDRED.*]

*Locrine.* Well, my son, what think you of this peasant?

*Brennus.* There's danger in the man : he ought not, Sir,

To breathe the air so closely to your dwelling.

*Locrine.* Point out the means by which I may prevent it.

*Brennus.* Pronounce the word—I have, within my call,

A friendly hand will rid you of his presence.

*Locrine.* That must not be :—for though I cou'd with ease

Frown him to dust, and seize upon my wish ;

Yet shou'd not force exert its iron form,

To stigmatize the deed with cruelty.

Besides, it were not safe ; he's much belov'd—

The son he mentions, too, with youthful feats

Has won the hearts of the young peasantry.

Cou'd some device be found with justice veil'd—

*Brennus.* Believe it done.—I will about it straight.

[*Exit BRENNUS.*]

*Locrine.* Speed thy intents, my son ;—for such the hate

I bear within my soul to this old rustic,

That, till I find the means to move him hence,

My sleep will be unsound.—Nor are his lands

The only cause of the dislike I bear him—

This son of his has surely wrought upon

The grateful sense of my deluded child :

And though I seem'd to Brennus but to slight

Her shyness to his suit, yet was it but

A seeming ; for numberless the reasons are

That wake my fears. Wou'd I were satisfied !

Who waits ?

*Enter*

44

*Enter S E R V A N T.*

*Servant.* My Lord !

*Locrine.* Inform the fair Eliza  
I'd speak with her. She something surely knows,

[*Exit Servant.* And will not fail to tell me her observings.  
If facts do justify my fears, by heav'n  
The son and sire shall both severely feel  
The fatal force of my deserv'd displeasure.

*Enter E L I Z A.*

*Locrine.* Come near, Eliza. I esteem thee much.  
I lov'd thy father well ; and that regard  
Is now transferr'd to thee. I do believe  
Thou wou'dst not see me plunging in perplexity,  
If it were thine to free me from my doubts.

*Eliza.* Be most assur'd I wou'd not.

*Locrine.* Know then, Eliza,  
My fears persuade me, that old Eldred's son  
Is the mean object of my daughter's wish,  
I did not think she wou'd have stoop'd so low ;  
But yet suspicious strongly point it to me,  
Has aught relating to it reach'd thy knowledge ?

*Eliza.* I grieve to think you shou'd suspect me,  
Sir,

Of any thing inclining to connivance  
At what must give your heart a moment's pain.

*Locrine.* No, no ; I know thou wou'dst not.  
You'll excuse  
The needless question ; for my fears suggest  
Thoughts even beyond belief. But say, Eliza,  
Has he been seen by her to-day ?

*Eliza.* To-day !

*Locrine.* Yes, I am told he was the messenger  
Who came from Vortimer. Saw'st thou him not ?

*Eliza.* No, on my word.

*Locrine.* Has she been left alone ?

*Eliza.*

*Eliza.* I did not quit her room my gracious lord  
But during the short space your converse held.

*Locrine.* 'Tis well. I hope thou wilt employ  
thy counsel  
To reconcile and bring her to her duty.  
Go to her chamber, and employ thy friendship  
To gain the secret. Ere I rest I'll know it;  
And yet I wou'd not willingly exert  
A father's stern authority to force her.

*Eliza.* Did you request she'd tell you, Sir?

*Locrine.* I did;  
And more than once inclinable she seem'd,  
But her emotions overcame her will.  
Away, my friend—I'll visit her anon.  
And hope to find her in a better mood.

[*Exit ELIZA.*

I long to hear how Brennus has proceeded  
Against this stubborn clown. And here he comes.

*Enter BRENNUS.*

Welcome, my son. What news?

*Brennus.* I give you joy:  
By this time, Sir, your wishes are complete.  
Wilt please you walk this way—ere long, perhaps,  
Your presence may be wanted—as we pass  
I shall relate our project.

*Locrine.* I attend.

[*Exeunt.*

**S C E N E,** changes to a Wood with a romantic  
Rock.

*Enter EDWENA.*

Here stands the pointed rock. I know it well.  
There tow'rs the cliff that frowns upon the vale.  
On this soft green-sward bank, tradition tells,  
The airy train of nimble footed sprights,  
Tripping their fairy circle by the shine  
Of the transparent moon, were wont to dance  
Their nightly gambols. How contriv'd the scene

To

To work our fancy to the tale's belief !  
 Even I, though desperate and savage grown,  
 Unshrinking cannot view the dusky dread  
 Which yawns around me.—Hark !—'tis only fancy—  
 All still—all hush'd—no footsteps but my own  
 Disturb the silent horrors of the place.  
 My Elidure, what mischief has befall'n thee ?  
 Inhuman father, cruel and unnatural,  
 Thus to compel me to these hard extremes.  
 Not yet arrived !... Protect me, gracious pow'rs !  
 Let me not sink beneath increasing fears,  
 Some noise—'Tis surely he—it is.—My life—

*Enter E L I D U R E.*

Why hast thou staid so long ?—Answer me, love,  
*Elidure.* Edwena !  
*Edwena.* Why do'st thou tremble thus ? Alas !  
 Whence this confusion ? Answer me !  
*Elidure.* I will,  
 Fast as my heart's quick throbings will permit.  
 From the tall grove where I beheld thee last,  
 With hasty steps I sought my father's house,  
 Eager to feel, in a fond parent's arms,  
 The glad'ning welcome of a son's return.  
 The door was clos'd.—The vale I travers'd o'er ;  
 He was not there.—The pendent brow I climb'd,  
 From whose soft surface, severing the clod,  
 With daily toil he culls his winter's fire :  
 My search was fruitless.—Downward as I look'd ;  
 Pacing the foot-path with his aged gait,  
 His walk from far I knew. I ran, I flew,  
 Eager to lighten his enfeebled arm  
 Of something which he bore. Ere I arriv'd,  
 A ruffian crew had seiz'd the aged man,  
 And fore'd him, helpless, back. The hindmost two  
 I levell'd with the sod—One rose no more :—  
 The rest had felt my arm, had not their leader,  
 Seizing by th' throat the poor defenceless victim,  
 Close at his breast pointed the gleaming steel.  
 Forbear, rash man, he cried ; or, by the gods !

This

This weapon drinks his blood. My master Brennus  
 Commands me to arrest this hoary traitor.  
 His servant's death full sorely he'll revenge ;  
 And nothing but thy own can make th' atonement.  
 Appall'd, my lifted sword withheld its blow,  
 And tacitly I view'd him borne away.

*Edwena.* Mysterious pow'rs ! — The fates are  
 leagu'd against us,  
 And thy ungovern'd rage completes our ruin.  
 Brennus suspects thee ; this some jealous plot  
 To drive thy youthful heat to desperation.  
 Thy father's innocence had stood secure.  
 How could'st thou be so rash ?

*Elidure.* Who cou'd refrain,  
 Whose kindred veins o'erflow'd with filial love,  
 And boil'd with courage to avow his duty?  
 The savage villains, with opprobrious taunts,  
 Arraign'd his innocent old age with guilt,  
 And, scornful, brandish'd o'er his silver locks  
 Their ruthless blades — courageous, 'cause secure ;  
 While, silent and serene, the good old man  
 Calmly resign'd him to their brutal malice.

*Edwena.* What can I think ? or how can I re-  
 solve ?  
 What dost thou urge ? or how hast thou determin'd ?  
 Hark !

*Elidure.* Speak ! Who's there ?

*Enter E L I Z A.*

*Eliza.* Be not alarm'd.

*Edwena.* Eliza !

What brings thee here, my friend ?

*Eliza.* With hasty steps  
 I flew to find you out. Scarce were you gone  
 When Eldred, guarded by an armed force,  
 Was brought into the hall accus'd of treason ;  
 And now in close confinement waits his trial.  
 But what concerns your present safety more,  
 A band of men, by Brennus's command,  
 Was instantly dispatch'd to search for Elidure,

With

With orders to secure and bring him back,  
To answer for the death of an attendant.  
They say he flew.

*Elidure.* Haste ! let us hence, my love.

*Edwena.* But whither hence ?—Shall I, along  
with thee,

Attempt the hopeless means of an escape ?  
Retard thy flight, entangle thee more surely  
Within the toils that wait thy lagging steps ?  
Be witness to thy fall—behold thee seiz'd,  
Torn from my arms, and murder'd in my sight ?  
Or shall I seek again my hated home,  
And, in the hearing of thy father's groans,  
Be dragg'd to loath'd embraces? Madd'ning thought !  
No ; here's my habitation. This shall be  
My long, my last abode. Come then, Despair !  
Drive from my brain the little sense that's left ;  
And, thron'd in terror, rest upon my eye.  
Off, empty trappings ! give me robes that suit me :  
Down, flowing tresses ! wanton in the wind—  
Bleed, bleed, my flesh ! deep-furrow'd with the  
thorns  
That yield thee food ; and, when with toil out-  
weary'd,  
Seek for thy pillow on this couch of Nature.

*Elidure.* Cruel Edwena ! thus to rack my soul  
With ill-tim'd burstings of a fruitless rage.  
Recall thy recollection. Thy complaints  
Destroy the share of reason Nature dealt me.  
Reflect, my love : the crisis of our fate  
Is now upon the hinge :—to hesitate  
Will ruin us for ever. Hear me, Edwena.

*Eliza.* You both are too much ruffled for reflexion.

Attend to the advice which coolness dictates.  
You, Elidure, with ease may make your way  
Across the cliffs—you know each hidden tract.  
E're morning dawn, you'll reach your prince's  
camp :  
Fall at his feet, and tell your hapless story ;  
He is too upright not to give redress.—

Mean

Mean time, do you return, and seek your chamber ;  
 Your absence is not known. Smooth your sad brow  
 Before this rude invader of your peace ;  
 Preserve your husband's father from the blow.  
 That's aim'd against his life ; and ere the day  
 That's meant for your espousals, Elidure  
 May be return'd again, I trust, in joy,  
 Bearing his prince's pardon for his rashness.

*Edwena.* Art thou Eliza, or our guardian angel  
 Sent to speak comfort in that friendly form ?  
 The breath of eloquence inspires thy words,  
 And prudence guides thy tongue. Begone, my love !  
 Fly quickly hence, fly from this place of danger,  
 Before these cruel blood-hounds trace thy steps.

*Elidure.* And leave thee here ? Oh heart-distracting conflict !  
 But hard necessity is in the scale,  
 And weighs beyond my will—Yet in my breast  
 A secret something whispers me to stay,  
 To save Edwena, and preserve a father.

*Edwena.* That would bring instant ruin on us all.  
 Farewell—when can I hope for thy return ?

*Elidure.* If fortune smiles, before to-morrow's sun  
 Shall climb the steep of heav'n,

*Edwena.* One last embrace.

*Elidure.* If thou wou'dst have us part, retire thyself ;

For while I hear thy voice, my feet are fix'd,  
 Are rooted here.

*Edwena.* Be safety thy companion,  
 And hovering angels thy unerring guides.

[*Exeunt EDWENA and ELIZA.*

*Elidure.* Farewell thou all that's dear !—Protecting pow'rs,

That watch o'er innocence, and virtue guard,  
 Compassionate my father's hoary locks !  
 Compassionate Edwena's sore affliction !  
 Preserve them harmless from those deadly snares  
 That circle them around : Point me to right,  
 To follow the just dictates of your will.

And O ! your mediating pow'rs dispense,  
To save from frenzy my perplexing sense.  
Exert your heav'nly mandates to controul  
These agonizing tumults in my soul.

[*Exit ELIDURE,*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

### A C T IV.

S C E N E, *A Chamber.*

E D W E N A.

**A**T length the morn's arrived—yon eastern hill,  
Fring'd with a golden radiance, bids rejoice  
Exulting nature, and abroad proclaims  
The jocund entry of the lord of day.  
How all creation gladdens at the view !  
To me it yields some dawn, and strikes a gleam  
Through the thick horror and condensing dark-  
ness

That overhang my soul. Ere this, I trust,  
My Elidure is safe ; at least no news  
Of the reverse, extends the line of hope.  
I wonder, though, Eliza is not here :  
I wish'd her call me with the waking lark.  
She comes, and cheerful comes ! a tranquil smile  
Beams confidence within.

*Enter. E L I Z A.*

*Eliza.* My lovely friend,  
Good day. I hope your mind is more at ease  
Than when I saw you last.

*Edwena.* Thanks, good Eliza.  
My weary thoughts, at length o'erwhelm'd with  
grief,  
Sought an asylum in a pleasing slumber.

I dreamt,

I dreamt, as on a precipice I stood,  
 Just darting from its summit to avoid  
 A monster gaping with a hideous yawn  
 And eager to devour me, suddenly  
 My Eldure, array'd in burnish'd arms,  
 And gliding in a golden car, preserv'd me  
 From dire destruction. There, enthron'd, I sat  
 In happiness and glory. But the joy,  
 Too pow'rful, severing the bands of sleep,  
 Brought back my thoughts to sad reality.  
 And yet, fantastic as the vision was,  
 So forcibly it wrought upon my mind,  
 The dear impression is not quite remov'd,  
 But shoots a distant ray of expectation  
 To my reviving hopes.

*Eliza.* Your dream portends  
 A happy termination to your woes.

*Edwena.* So says my wish—But has there aught  
 transpir'd  
 Of Eldure since last we spoke together?

*Eliza.* Not a word.—I sent, as you requested,  
 A messenger to gain intelligence;  
 But nothing could he learn.

*Edwena.* What hear'st thou then  
 Of Eldred?

*Eliza.* Close confin'd within the cell,  
 He still remains.

*Edwena.* What is their charge against him?

*Eliza.* Some act of treason, as I am inform'd;  
 But what, distinctly cannot yet be gather'd.

*Edwena.* I doubt, my father! thou hast play'd  
 him false.  
 Those fields of his have long disturb'd thy peace,  
 And now, I fear, bring ruin on their master.

*Eliza.* Heav'n pardon you the thought!—you  
 cannot, sure,  
 Suspect a parent of so dark a deed.

*Edwena.* Eldred I can't; nor wou'd I doubt my  
 father.  
 Brennus I shou'd suspect; to him alone  
 The guilt I wou'd impute—there turn, Suspicion,

Thy dark envenom'd eye. And, O Eliza !  
If e'er thou lov'dst me, now thy friendship join  
To aid my efforts in a good man's cause.

*Eliza.* Tell me, my friend ! which way can I  
assist you ?

*Edwena.* Find out the messenger you just now  
mention'd ;

Let him again endeavour to obtain  
An interview with Eldred--Bid him say,  
My services are lab'ring in his favour :  
Wish him to keep his firmness and his patience  
Beneath his load of mortifying wrongs.  
And, as I dare not personally wait  
The issue of his trial, let the man  
With diligence observe each circumstance,  
And bring me present notice of th' event.

*Eliza.* With care I shall perform the friendly  
office.

*Edwena.* Fly, my Eliza ! and return with speed.

[Exit. ELIZA.]

Mean time I'll importune the right'ous gods  
To save my husband, and to clear his father.

[Exit EDWENA.]

### S C E N E changes to a Hall.

Enter LOCRINE and BRENNUS talking.

*Locrine.* Granted all this—suppose the son no  
more,

The father too ta'en off--how can I hold,  
With any show of right, their patrimony ?

*Brennus.* Nothing more plain.—Convicted, as  
they shall be,

Of murder and of treason, their estate  
I seize for the king's use, and give to you.  
The thing, too trifling for the royal notice,  
Will cause no question; or suppose it shou'd,  
You'll find my int'rest and my pow'r too great  
'To heed inquiry.

*Locrine.* Moves it not your wonder

The

The villain cou'd escape the hot pursuit ?  
Such numbers too !

*Brennus.* I hear he took the rock,  
Favour'd by darkness and his thorough knowledge  
Of the wild pathless height.—But faithful Morgan,  
Who bears dispatches from me to the king,  
With his two hardy comrades, all well arm'd,  
Ere this have laid him low.—Such were my orders ;  
Or, if they reach'd him not upon the road,  
To seek the royal tent, and get command  
To seize him as a murderer in the camp.

*Enter S E R V A N T.*

*Servant.* The prisoner, my lord, attends without.  
*Brennus.* Bring him in.—[*Ex. Ser.*]—Will you examine the delinquent ?  
Or shall I ?

*Locrine.* Do you ; it best will suit you.  
I must not seem to interfere in this.

*Brennus.* 'Twere better not, unless necessity  
Requires you shou'd. I'll soon dispatch the busines.

*Enter E L D R E D in chains. Guards, &c.*

Dost thou now come, dissimulating veteran,  
To gull our senses with the mask of truth,  
Whilst all within is perfidy and treason ?

*Eldred.* It is not, lord, a mark of dignity,  
Thus to insult the feelings of distress ;  
Nor yet of equity, to slander innocence  
With aggravating epithets of guilt,  
Till facts indelible have prov'd the crime.

*Brennus.* That we shall soon effect. Produce  
the witness.

*Eldred.* First let me know by what authority  
I'm order'd here, or who's to be my judge ?  
I own no ruler but my king ; no laws  
But of my country. Sacred may they be,  
And curs'd the wretch that offers to subvert them !  
If, by those pow'rs a magistrate appointed,

You call me to my answer—I obey:—  
 If not, though helpless, aged, and in chains,  
 I will withstand the will of usurpation,  
 And, with my latest breath, defy thy mandate.

*Brennus.* Thou hast not yet, I find, forgot thy boasting,

Thy ill-tim'd pride, and low-born insolence.

*Eldred.* What call'st thou boasting?—honest utterance!

What call'st thou insolence?—a consciousness  
 Of unthought guile and native rectitude!  
 A soul, with guilt unsil'y'd, cannot shrink  
 Beneath oppressive threats—And, hear me, Sir;  
 The silver streamlet trickling from the spring,  
 Is not more free from the polluting soil,  
 Than is my breast exempt from conscious ill.

*Brennus.* Professions, without facts, are but the masks

Of artful villany, the cloaks of fallacy,  
 To gain belief from unsuspecting hearers,  
 And sin with lesser fear of a detection.  
 Such are the motives of thy vain assertions,  
 Else why decline a hearing of thy actions?

*Eldred.* Why wilt thou urge me utter those assertions?

Or why compel me to dispute thy office?  
 Thy pow'r approv'd, I shall await my doom  
 With truth-rob'd confidence and calm submission.

*Brennus.* I come not here to argue my authority  
 With ev'ry stubborn fool that dares deny it.  
 But, that thy wily cunning may suggest  
 No room for captious hindrance or cavil,  
 Know then, by legal right, by regal deputation,  
 Thou seest me here, a chief and magistrate,  
 With orders to exert the force of law  
 To punish rapine and controul injustice.

*Eldred.* I might require a clearer certainty  
 Of thy appointment, than this bare recital—  
 But best an individual like me  
 Should risk some wrong, than by punctilious doubts  
 To stay the course of justice, or retard

The

The smallest execution of the laws.

What have your witnesses to urge against me?

*Brennus.* Eliud, stand forth.

*Eliud.* My lord!

*Brennus.* Know'st thou this man?

*Eliud.* Most perfectly.

*Brennus.* Say what of him thou know'st.

*Eliud.* The morning of that memorable day

When Hengist first gain'd access to our vales,

Sent by your order to survey the pass

Which you were station'd to defend, I found

All safe—each man attentive to his post.

When down a splinter'd crevice of the cliff,

A passage by no human footsteps press'd,

Except the native shepherds of the hill

Seeking some straggler wander'd from the flock,

I thought I saw the gleaming of a helm.

Advancing nearer, my astonish'd eye

Perceiv'd distinctly the unthought-of tract

: Unbosoming a band of armed men,

And he, that rebel, pointing out the way.

I hasten'd to acquaint you with the tidings,

But all too late—I need not say the rest.

*Brennus.* Too well we know it.—Thou rebellious traitor,

What can thy hoary artifice suggest,

Why sentence should not instantly be pass'd,

Such as thy crime deserves?

*Eldred.* Alas, my lord!

Why shou'd I plead, why offer a defence,

When you, my judge, seem wishful to promote

And speak my condemnation? Here I swear

By the great sacred Ruler of the sky,

I know no more of this alledged crime,

Than does the babe before its infant cry

Wails its arrival in this land of sorrow.

*Brennus.* Thy mere denial will not be admitted—

Unless some witness can attest thy innocence:

Thy crime stands prov'd, and the award is death.

*Eldred.* I have no witness but an honest heart;

No friends to back me, but my spotless thoughts;

No vouchers, but my own plain words—alas !  
 Too ineffectual to excite remorse  
 In thee my hard and stony adversary.—  
 No, no, fond tongue ; vain are the sounds of truth ;  
 The lamb unheeded bleats within the grasp  
 Of the devouring wolf—My guiltless life  
 Is the devoted victim—Wou'd that were all !  
 I'd yield it freely.—But a keener stab  
 Pierces my straining vitals—Hold, my heart,  
 Thy wonted firmness—burst not ere thy time—  
 Lord—Locrine—hear me---'tis to thee I now  
 Address my speech.—

*Locrine.* Go on, I am attentive.

*Eldred.* Does not a livid paleness taint thy  
 cheek,

To view these chains corrode my aged flesh,  
 And silent, like an unconcerned spectator,  
 Behold me fall by the stern hand of pow'r,  
 Because by villainy I have been hunted  
 And drove within her pale ? Or hast thou train'd  
 The bloody pack, and join'd 'em in the cry ?—  
 Too sure, thou hast ;—and dearly I abide  
 My late refusal of thy proffer'd purchase.—  
 Yes, there's my source of ill—what else cou'd raise  
 This deep-laid plot against my harmless life ?—  
 Inhuman robbers ! ---was it not enough  
 To spoil me of my all, but, with my being,  
 You'd plunder my good name, traduce my memory,  
 And whelm a son too in his parent's ruin ?—  
 Sit fast, my brain, and turn not with the thought—  
 My boy ! my virtuous boy ! thy killing wrongs  
 Cut deeper than my own—Cruel reflection !—  
 Oh ! the sharp trying pang—it grinds—it breaks  
 The crackling cords that bind the seat of life,  
 Shatters the crazy texture of my frame,  
 And drags the crashing fabric to the earth.

*Locrine.* Infinuating wretch ! how dar'st thou thus  
 Attack my character and name, in terms  
 So dark and grossly vile ?—I had design'd  
 To interpose my voice in thy behalf ;  
 But thou hast forfeited my kind intentions.

Canst thou expect from such opprobrious language  
To merit mercy, or to gain our pity?

*Eldred.* Mercy I hope not, that's against your  
int'rest:

I ask no pity, 'tis not in your natures;  
Else cou'd your flinty bosoms ne'er suggest  
A thought so bloody, barbarous and savage,  
To subject a poor, helpless, innocent  
Old man to misery like mine:--

*Brennus.* No more:  
Hear what the law decrees.--For that thou hast,  
In vile despite of nature's nearest impulse,  
Assisted in their cruel depredations  
Britain's detested foes--thy all and life  
Become the legal forfeits of the state.  
Guards, take him hence, and execute the sentence.

*Eldred.* A little longer, but a little longer,  
And part of that hard sentence had been needless!--  
Affist, some friendly hand, to raise me up--  
Grant me the last kind favour you can give,  
Your help to bear me from the fatal sight  
Of those death-darting basilisks!... Yet... held...  
One word before I go,--Great Gods that view  
The thoughts of man--you know my heart,  
You see the ray of innocence around it;  
Receive me to your care--and O forgive  
My persecutors--on their trial-day!  
Let them not want that mercy and that pity  
Which their hard hearts unjustly have denied me.

[As he is going out, enter EDWENA.  
*Edwena,* [Speaking to the Guards who are carrying  
out ELDRED.]

Defer your cruel orders for a moment  
Ye ministers of death.--Forgive me, Sir,  
If I presume a while to stay your mandates;

[Exit BRENNUS and Eliud with Servant.  
And you, my father, that I intermeddle  
In what perhaps you term beyond my sphere.--  
But, oh! can I behold you plunging down  
A boundless steep of mis'ry, and with-hold  
My filial hand to save you from the danger?

Observe

Observe that face!—can ills inhabit there?  
 And sure, you cou'd not rest your head in peace,  
 And bear within your breast the hard reflection,  
 That you had destin'd innocence to death!—  
 What! honest Eldred!—the man so long rever'd  
 For rectitude, the mirror of uprightness!—  
 O Sir! reflect before it be too late.—  
 Preserve your name from the detested blot  
 His fate must bring upon it:—nor shall mine  
 Escape the stain—I too must share the stigma;  
 And hisping lips shall brand me as I pass,  
 As daughter to the murderer of virtue.—

*Locrine.* Whence these emotions? whence this  
 ill-tim'd fervor?  
 Or why these vain suggestions?—Know'st thou not  
 The laws, not I, have doom'd his guilty fall?—  
 His crime approv'd and clear, by what pretence  
 Can I avert the righteous stroke of justice?

*Edwena.* Alas, my lord! did justice here pre-  
 side—  
 But I'm your daughter; and it ill becomes me  
 To say what tongues indifferent will urge  
 As the vindictive mercenary cause  
 Of his destruction.—Or suppose him guilty?  
 For my sake, Sir, preserve him. O reflect,  
 He gave me second being—his son redeem'd  
 My fleeting life, or now you had been childless—  
 O turn not from me—'tis your daughter sues,  
 You lov'd Edwena—Must I sue in vain?  
 No; I will cling, thus clasp around your knees,  
 Till rising pity beams upon your brow,  
 And cheers me with the lambent light of mercy.

*Locrine.* I charge thee rise, and cease thy fruit-  
 less suit,  
 Perverse and headstrong girl! By heav'n I swear,  
 Were I inclin'd to mercy, thou hast rous'd  
 Reflections in my breast, that wou'd at once  
 Destroy the rising charitable thought.—  
 Thy motives for this foolish partiality  
 Are not to me unknown—Away—retire—

Hence

Hence to thy chamber—Harbour not a wish  
Against thy duty, or beneath thy rank.

*Edwena.* Yes, Sir, I will; I have observ'd  
my duty.

My duty bids me use my utmost means  
To save from wrongs that venerable man.  
And since intreaties cannot reach your heart,  
Nor wake you to the gentle calls of pity,  
I'll try the sympathizing pow'rs of nature,  
And ties of kindred—Elidure's my husband.

*Locrine.* Perdition to that word!

*Eldred.* Benignant heav'n!

*Edwena.* Yes, Eldred's son, his Elidure's my  
husband.

*Locrine.* O grant me patience, ye eternal  
pow'rs!

To bear the cutting sound—Abandon'd girl,  
Go share thy husband's fate; for by yon heav'n,  
I here, henceforth, renounce all intercourse  
With thee and thine. Mark, I disclaim thee. Hence!  
Fly from this roof, and see my face no more!

[Exit LOCRISE.]

*Edwena.* Severe resolve—unnatural decree!—  
Yet shakes it not the dictates of my soul.

*Eldred.* My heav'nly guardian! my protecting  
angel!

Thus let me kneel, and thank thee for thy care.

*Edwena.* O Sir, forbear! nor cover me with  
blushes.

First let me crave your blessing, and your pardon,  
For that I have so long conceal'd your state,  
And left you subject to such cruel wrongs. [Kneels.]

*Eldred.* My child! my benefactress! [Kneels, and  
embraces.]

Enter BRENNUS.

*Brennus.* See bestow'd  
The merited reward; he has, besides,  
Our warmest thanks. Madam, I must command  
Your speedy separation; 'tis not fit You

You should behold the sequel—Eliud  
 Shall bring you presently our farther will.  
 Remove your prisoner, and guard him well. [To Gu.  
*Edwena.* Slaves, touch him not—stand back, and  
 learn your distance.

'Tis I defend him!—I—and ere your swords  
 Can touch his guiltless life, my own heart's blood  
 Shall bathe their reeking points—And, monster!—  
 thou,

Thou too should'st tremble at the words I utter,  
 For know the valiant Eliud approaches;  
 Secure I trust he comes, with royal grace,  
 To save a father, and protect a wife;  
 When, if thou dar'st attempt the hopeless trial,  
 A parent's right'ous cause, and his bold arm,  
 Shall whelm thee down with terror and dismay.

*Brennus.* I own I shall not meet him willingly;  
 I hope to live a little longer, Madam.  
 For hear, insulting female! and let fall  
 Thy hopes—That boaster is no more.

*Edwena.* Ha!

*Eldred.* Heav'n's!

*Brennus.* A messenger has just now brought me  
 word,  
 That, overta'en near Oerddrew's knotty brow,  
 And call'd to turn and answer for his guilt,  
 He spurn'd their pow'r, and in the conflict fell.

[*EDWENA falls.*

*Eldred.* O save that sinking excellence—

*Enter E L I Z A.*

*Brennus.* Away,  
 Intruding dotard—leize and bear him off.  
*Eldred.* Look there—will you—Oh!—can  
 you force me hence,  
 Without one parting word—one longing look?—

*Brennus.* Obey my orders, bear him to his cell,  
 There wait my farther purpose.

*Eldred.* Hence assassins—

*Thou viper—thou unfeeling viper—monster—*

*Brennus.*

*Brennus.* Remove him from my sight.

*Eldred.* Murder!—no help?—

Hear me then, gods!—O let this monster suffer  
Torments unknown—yet uninvented pains,  
Form'd by the first of wo-creating furies;  
That he may feel anguish immense as mine,  
Stings sharp as now pierce my poor aged bosom;  
Rend my weak straining eye-strings, and cut short  
The faint expiring sobs of weary nature.

[*Is carried off.*

*Brennus.* How fares Edwena? does she breathe?

*Eliza.* Not yet.

*Brennus.* Assist her with thy care, while I attend

Her father.

[*Exit BRENNUS.*

*Eliza.* Friend!—Edwena!—sure the life  
Is fled. No, she revives.—

*Edwena.* Your stay was long,  
My love. How cold thou art!—a deadly wan  
Spreads o'er thy cheek.—Why dost thou fly me so?  
Stay—soft—Whete am I?

*Eliza.* Guard her reason, heav'n!

*Edwena.* Eliza—oh—

*Eliza.* How fare you, madam?

*Edwena.* Well;  
At least I shall be soon; for oh, I feel  
The cold damp hand of death upon my heart.  
My friend, thy arm—support me.—Where is Eldred?

*Eliza.* The guards have led him—

*Edwena.* Ah me! to execution?

*Eliza.*—No, madam; to his cell.

*Edwena.* Conduct me thither.

*Eliza.* Might I advise ye, seek composure first.

*Edwena.* Where? in the grave?—that peaceful  
couch alone

Can give composure to distress'd Edwena.—

Think'it thou, thus exil'd from a parent's love,  
My husband murder'd, and his father doom'd  
To death's hard conflict, aught can bring relief  
To my afflicting agonizing pangs,  
But the dark confines of the silent tomb?—

To those blest mansions, Eldred, I'll attend thee,  
In search of happiness denied us here:

There walk with Eliudre the blissful plains,  
Where wo intrudes not, nor injustice reigns;  
Sharing those blessings which the gods dispense,  
To conscious truth and heav'n-born innocence.

[*Exeunt EDWENA and ELIZA.*

### A C T V.

#### S C E N E, A Hall.

*Enter BRENNUS, and ELIUD following.*

*Brennus.*

**N**O news of Morgan yet?

*Eliud.* None, my good lord.

*Brennus.* Why comes not Eric?

*Eliud.* Sir, he is not found.

*Brennus.* Had he the promis'd gold?

*Eliud.* He had.

*Brennus.* I wish,

Now leisure-suits, minutely to inquire  
How chanc'd their meeting with that Eliudre,  
And by what means he fell. Report to me  
Each circumstance as to thyself related.

*Eliud.* Near as my memory will let.—Not far  
Your faithful party, with impatient steps,  
Had measur'd the ascent to Oerddrew's cliff,  
Beyond the grove of Guanus, when above,  
In clinking sounds, the loosen'd stones betray'd  
The certain tread of feet: soon was descriy'd  
Upon the brow the sculking fugitive.

Eladud, most fleet of foot, first gain'd the pass  
That leads to Mouthy's vale, waylaid the slave,  
And sunk beneath his might. Morgan in vain  
Rush'd on to save his friend:—himself had fall'n  
Before the daring foe, had not a rock,  
Lanch'd from fierce Eric's arm, repell'd his death,  
And left an easy conquest for their swords.

*Brennus.* There let him rest. But what of Morgan then?

*Eliud.*

*Eliud.* Dispatching Eric back to bear the news  
Of the event, he posted to the camp  
On special message, as I understood,  
From you.

*Brennus.* Ere this he might have been return'd.

*Eliud.* He surely might.

*Brennus.* The moment he arrives  
Let me have notice.

*Eliud.* Sir, most certainly.

*Brennus.* Who had the watch last night ?

*Eliud.* Till the third cock,  
My lord, 'twas mine.

*Brennus.* Know'st thou if Loctrine's daughter,  
Sought for admittance at the cell this morning ?

*Eliud.* She has not, Sir; but messengers, I  
hear,

Requesting entrance, oft have been refus'd. —

*Brennus.* How bore she her denial yesterday ?

*Eliud.* With all the burst of disappointed rage ;  
Till, quite exhausted with the force of passion,  
Her spirits sunk to senseless inattention ;  
When, by the friendly counsel of Eliza,  
I help'd to bear her to her own apartment.

*Brennus.* Let her be told, if it now suits her  
will,

She has my leave to see the prisoner ;  
And send me instant word of her arrival.

*Eliud.* I shall observe, my lord.

*Brennus.* When Morgan comes,  
Forget not presently to bear me tidings.

*Eliud.* You shall not, Sir, have cause to doubt  
my care. [Exit ELIUD.

*Brennus.* Thy zeal shall be rewarded. • Morgan's  
stay

Creates suspense. I wou'd he were return'd !  
This league of friendship with the Saxon king  
Concluded once, my project were secure.  
Loctrine, grown frantic through ungovern'd fury,  
Seems quite depriv'd of reason ; which affords me  
A just pretence to manage his affairs  
As his intended son. The husband's death  
Has render'd, too, more probable the union ;

And Eldred's present sentence and confinement  
 May prove the means to forward that event ;  
 At least it shall be tried.—Yes, haughty dame !  
 In spite of all your boasted fortitude  
 I'll yet find means to bend you to my will.

[Exit BRENNUS.]

S C E N E changes to a Prison.

ELDRED discovered in chains upon the ground.

Eldred. Welcome, my valiant boy !—Soft—soft.  
 —where am I ?

O flatt'ring fantasy !—thou balm of wo !  
 Thou balsam grateful to affliction's wounds !  
 How well hast thou beguil'd the weary hour !  
 But now with ecstacy I view'd my son  
 Crown'd with the wreath of conquest ; while afar,  
 In pealful plaudits, rung the deaf'ning shouts  
 Of victory and joy—when lo, I wake  
 To the sad horrors of a dungeon's gloom.  
 Robb'd of my Eliudre, my heart's sole comfort,  
 What am I now ?—the scoff of human nature !—  
 A helpless, childless, and distress'd old man !  
 I'll try to rise—So—so—'Tis morn—Once more—  
 I see the light—perhaps for the last time.  
 Shrink not, my flesh, nor shudder at the thought.  
 My life o'ercast in its approaching eve,  
 And just descending to the shade of night,  
 Why shou'd I tremble to behold the veil  
 Of endless peace drawn o'er my closing eye ?  
 Cast off that frown, inexorable death !  
 Thou hast no terror for a spotless bosom :  
 For if the mind survives the body's exit,  
 And that it does my very dream portends,  
 That Pow'r which gives it being will dispense  
 The just rewards that wait a right'ous life ;  
 Or if in death all sense of thought expires,  
 Then with that thought all feeling must be lost.  
 Thus, hopeful of the best, and of the worst  
 Regardless, will I meet the stroke of fate,  
 And yield me, cheerful, to the will of heav'n.

*Edwena*

*Edwena.* (*without*). I have your master's orders for admittance. [Enter EDWENA.]

*Edwena.* Where art thou, Eldred?

*Eldred.* That benignant voice strikes harmonizing softness through the soul, And beams a day of cheerfulness around This solitary cell.—My heav'nly visitor! O how shall I receive thee in this drear, This deathful mansion!

*Edwena.* Thou much injur'd man, I come to share thy woes. The tyger grows Unnatural; and I have leave at length To mix my tears with thine.—Have I thy hand— And do I find thee safe?—How hast thou been?

*Eldred.* As well as piercing miseries, like mine, Wou'd give me leave?

*Edwena.* Fain wou'd I see thy face; But the dim particles of distant day Glimmer too faintly through this cavern'd gloom. Let me conduct thee to the light: our foes, Though ripe with savageness, will scarce deny That favour to me. Lean upon my arm.

*Eldred.* In vain I try for words to speak my thanks; 'Twou'd pose the pow'r of language. Silent, then, Let me admire thy worth—while the big tear Proclaims my joy, my gratitude, and wonder.

[*Exeunt EDWENA and ELDRED.*]

SCENE changes to the Area before the Dungeon.

*Re-enter EDWENA, leading ELDRED.*

*Edwena.* [*To the guards, who retire.*] Friends, give us leave a while; at distance wait, And seek not to intrude upon our converse.

*Eldred.* A little farther—yet a little farther— Let me encroach upon thy gentle nature: The air's refreshment, grateful to the sense, Cheers my old frame, and lightens these hard shackles.

*Edwena.* Wou'd I cou'd bear their weight.— Alas! my father, How pale thou look'st!—

*Eldred.* Thou pattern of all tenderness,  
 This kind concern speaks comfort to my sufferings.  
 But oh ! thy sight, afflicted as thou art,  
 Gives heart-felt anguish for thy cruel wrongs  
 Far keener than my own ; and in my mind  
 Rouses reflections I wou'd willingly  
 Erase from memory's distracted page.—  
 O fly this place !—desert my luckless fate  
 Before I drag thee down into destruction.  
 Thy torch, new-lighted, glows transparently  
 With strength and clearness, and may spotless shine  
 An age to come :—then let not my weak lamp  
 Pollute that brightness with its dying smother,  
 But twinkling sink unnoticed in its socket.

*Edwena.* Alas ! thou know'st but little of the  
 firmness

Edwena's breast contains, to think I cou'd  
 Endure a weary loathsome life—nay, life  
 On fairest terms, and suffer the lov'd father  
 Of my Elidure— O Sir !—I need your aid—  
 On mention of that name, the briny torrent  
 Out-bursts its limits, and the strong emotion  
 O'ercomes the pow'rs of speech.—

*Eldred.* Bright excellence !

Look down, my son—my boy —my Elidure —  
 If yet thou hast not gain'd the realms of bliss,  
 But stay't to make me partner of thy flight ;  
 Look down, and view this model of perfection,  
 Of truth, of virtue, and connubial fondness !

*Edwena.* Yes, my pale love ! can I behold thy  
 father,

My father too, (for I've no parent now  
 But him), a prey to piercing miseries,  
 Anguish, and death, and look unheeding on ?  
 Away, vile thought ! — No, no, thou injur'd good  
 ness,

I'll wait thee ev'n in death ; for thou'd thy foes  
 Refuse to join me in thy cruel sentence,  
 If there be water, steel, or pointed rocks,  
 I'll find some means to rid me of this clay,  
 And lead thee fleeting to my husband's shade.

*Eldred.*

*Eldred.* Take heed, fair creature—there thou'dst  
quit the path

Of thy uprightness—That were a foul attack  
On heaven's prerogative, a theft against  
The most Supreme, which sorely wou'd inthrall  
thee.—

Life for a life is human forfeiture;  
But he who robs the gods of his own being,  
Though he evade his miseries on earth,  
To keener pains must be consigned hereafter.  
How cou'dst thou bear to view thy husband's shade  
Treading the blissful valleys of Elysium,  
Whilst thou, secluded from those bright abodes,  
Art doom'd to wander o'er a barren waste  
For suicide, the sad eternal mansion—

*Edwena.* Oh, Sir! I feel your words as flakes  
of ice;  
At once they cut, and freeze my wounded soul.  
Instruct me how to bear the threatening mischief.

*Eldred.* With resignation to the higher Pow'rs  
Await thy dissolution. I and Eliudre  
Will hover o'er thee till thy hour of fate.  
Then, joining, wing our flight to happier regions,  
Where man's injustice can no more undo us.

*Edwena.* That wish'd event were purchas'd  
cheap indeed,  
Ev'n by an age of woe.—And yet, alas!  
How can my suff'ring nature bear the task?—  
But soon begins the trial—for my sum  
Of earthly ills concentres in that form!

*Enter BRENNUS and Guards.*

*Brennus.* You two remain within;—the rest re-  
tire

And closely guard the portal. So, Madam,  
You still, I find, embrace the tott'ring ruin;  
Nor will regard the dread impending danger,  
Till whelm'd in the destruction.

*Edwena.* Shameless monster!  
Thou art my ruin—thou art my destruction.  
Who else but thee cut off the growing branch?  
And com'st thou now to fell the sick'ning stem?

*Brennus.*

*Brennus.* I come, ill natur'd fair one, to assuage,  
Thy present anguish, and restore thy peace.

*Edwena.* Canst thou bring back the life? recal  
the breath?

Bid it reanimate its earthly frame,  
And give it to resume its vital motion?—  
No, no, thou canst not! — Henee, then, with thy  
vain

Insidious arts—I will not be deluded.

*Brennus.* I come not here profusely to expend  
A waste of time in fruitless altercation.  
Then to the point — Thy husband now no more,  
Thou hast no tie to hold thee from my suit.  
Thy father's contract gives thee to my arms;  
My right, unalienable but by death.  
Yet still I would not wish to use the means  
Of harsh constraint, unless I am compell'd  
By thy morose and obstinate perverseness.  
Eldred's distress sorely thou seem'st to mourn;  
He shall be free — this moment I'll release him,  
So thou'lt submit thee calmly to the rites  
Thy father's wish and my true passion urge.—  
Start'ft thou? — this instant yield thee to my offer,  
Or, by the gods! he dies. — I'll wait no forms;  
But instant have him strangled in thy sight.

*Eldred.* O listen not to his accurs'd proposal!  
Stain not, bright innocent, thy spotless bosom  
With such a shameful act. — What! — marry him! —  
Brennus! the hateful murderer of thy husband —  
Nature cries out and shudders at the union.  
See, at thy feet an injured father begs  
The fate he threats, sooner than linger here  
A wretched life preserv'd by thy undoing.  
O let me die a thousand, thousand deaths,  
Rather than he, that monster should succeed,  
And triumph in his villainy; — for then  
Each day, each hour, each moment, were a death  
Attended with excruciating torments. —

*Edwena.* Rise, reverend fire, thy arguments  
prevail,  
Decide the struggling conflict in my breast  
'Twixt filial pity and my tortur'd virtue,

And

And rouse my coward nature to its duty.—  
Know then, thou wretch ! that I despise thy threatenings.

Here sheathe thy hungry steel—I'll suffer death,  
Nay, what is worse than twice ten thousand deaths,  
Unshrinking see him breathless—ere I yield  
To thy detested, to thy loath'd embraces.

*Brennus.* I'll put thee to the test—perform your orders. [To guards going to seize ELDRED.

*Edwena.* Hold, ye infernal ministers of death,  
You do mistake your office—I'm the criminal ;  
I'm the sole object of your master's rage :  
On me, on me, turn all your cruelty.

*Brennus.* No hesitation, slaves ! obey my will.

[Seize ELDRED.

*Eldred.* O for my liberty and youth !—Away—  
Off, hirelings, off—or you will rouse a flame  
Will forge these fetters into edged arms,  
To hack ye, slaves !—

[Wrests himself from them, and staggers against the scene.]

*Brennus.* Take, then, thy fate from me.

*Edwena.* O hold thy murdering hand !—

*Brennus.* Away, vain woman ;  
Consent thee to my wishes, or he falls.—

*Eliud.* (Speaking without) Stand by, ye hellish guards ! and let me pass :  
Who dares resistance, dies ——

*Edwena.* What heavenly sound  
Accosts my ears ? ——

*Brennus.* Secure the inner door. [Exit Guards.

*Eliud.* Assault the portal ; seize those flying slaves ! ——

*Edwena.* Is it his mortal voice, or from above  
Comes he to snatch us from the threat'ning grasp  
Of cruelty and guilt ! — [Guard. Eliud returns.

*Eliud.* My lord ! young Eliud,  
Attended with a band of armed youths,  
Is breaking through the gate.

*Brennus.* Accurs'd the tongue  
That tells it.

*Edwena.*

*Edwena.* Tyrant! now—now vainly storm,—  
Or supplicate thy fellow fiends to aid thee.—

[*Shouts and clash of swords.*—  
Hear'st thou those shouts? melodiously they sound—  
My husband comes, to shake the deathful blade,  
My husband comes!—yes, tremble at the word,  
To strike thee nerveless with his forceful arm,  
**And gleam confusion to thy guilty sight.**

*Eldred.* Break, break, ye crackling hinges! my  
old eyes

Will burst with expectation else to see  
My boy, my Elidure.

*Brennus.* That shall not be  
On earth: for since I'm taken in the toil,

[*A loud crash as of the bursting of gates.*—  
I'll have my vengeance ere the hunters seize me.  
Die, wretch!—

[*Offers to kill ELDRED.*—

*Enter E.L.I.D.U.R.E., in a rich Saxon dress, who runs in between ELDRED and BRENNUS.*

*Elidure.* Hold, hateful monster! hither turn  
Thy murd'rous point. This bosom will not shrink.

*Brennus.* Be thou a man or demon, I'll assail  
thee—

Yet, ere we close, give answer to my question;  
Art thou an earthly, or immortal being?  
For I believ'd thee dead.

*Elidure.* That I still live,  
These firm substantial nerves shall let thee know.  
I here arrest thee, traitor; therefore yield thee,  
Or thou diest. Such are my sov'reign's orders.

*Brennus.* Assail'd by odds, and circled thus  
around,

Yet fearless will I dare the test. Strike home,  
And if I shrink—

*Elidure.* No words; have at thy heart.

[*Fight. BRENNUS falls.*—

*Eldred.* Support my son, ye pow'rs—He falls—  
he falls—

*Brennus.* Perfidious chance! disgraceful destiny!—

Thus

Thus—thus to sink beneath a peasant's stroke! —  
 And yet, the veil of prejudice, remov'd,  
 My fall is just—I'm caught within the net  
 My hand had spread—Excuse it gods! and oh—

[Dies.]

*Eldred.* My boy——

*Elidure.* My father—my lov'd Edwena.

*Edwena.* O my surviving love—my dearest husband!

Art thou not hurt? No, no, I clasp, I have thee  
 Safe in my arms—But let me view thee well—  
 What has befall'n thee?—let me know it all.

*Elidure.* O my dear love, the story of my fortune

Since I beheld thee last, shall be related  
 When better leisure suits—At present this—  
 The vile assassins on the cliff o'ertook me.  
 The first advancing, heedless of his safety,  
 Had felt my vengeance ere his friends arriv'd.  
 The odds I combated—Morgan receiv'd  
 The death he merited—The other fled;  
 And by a faithless lie, receiv'd the wages  
 Of a deceitful and deceived villain.

*Edwena.* But whence this change of dress—  
 this strange equipment?

*Elidure.* Morgan expiring, with a conscious  
 dread,

Confess'd, that he, by Brennus's command,  
 Forg'd the foul falsehood of my father's treason:  
 For which, in some degree, to make amends,  
 He gave me from his bosom a black scroll  
 As e'er disgrac'd the pen of wickedness;  
 Terms of an hated league and combination  
 To sell his country to her mortal foe.

I bore them to the camp—where I arriv'd  
 As the two armies, in battalia rang'd,  
 Each other fac'd. A Saxon of vast strength  
 Challeng'd the bravest of our hosts—On me  
 Our gracious king conferr'd the glorious task;  
 I fought, and I subdu'd the haughty braggart.  
 His arms and dress, an earnest of rewards,  
 You now behold.—The Saxon's death at once

Struck

Struck terror to the enemy, and courage  
To our transported ranks.—The victory  
Declar'd for Vortimer; who presently  
Gave ear to my complainings, and redrefs'd 'em.  
For, well convinc'd of Brennus's defection,  
He sent me to heap vengeance on the traitor,  
Commander in his room.

*Edwena.* Great Heav'n, in this  
Your justice shines conspicuous; for which,  
And all your blessings, my glad heart o'erflows  
With wonder and with thanks.

*Enter E L I Z A.*

*Eliza.* The news I bring  
Will damp, I fear, your present glow of fortune.  
Locrine, escaping in the general uproar,  
Outstripp'd pursuit; and gaining the round turret  
Which fronts the western cliff, threw himself head-  
long.

I saw him breathless brought into the house,  
And presently made haste to tell it you.

*Elidure.* I own, my love, your tears are natural  
On this occasion. Rest upon my arm.  
I will support thee through the road of life,  
With the joint duties of a husband's love  
And a fond father's care.

*Eldred.* His wretched fate  
I too lament. His crime, I know, proceeded  
From the persuasions of that cruel monster:  
But he was guilty found, and merited  
The rage of the Supreme; who rightfully  
Distributes justice to the race of mortals.

For though a while the wicked man may reign,  
At Heav'n's indulgence let us not complain.  
Its roused vengeance will at length awake,  
And righteous wrath the impious overtake.

